



De Witte uel vix pinx.

Thornton's sculp.

M^{rs} ESTLIN as BELVIDERA.

London. Printed for J. Bell, British Library, Strand March 9, 1791.

VENICE PRESERVED.

OR,

A PLOT DISCOVERED.

A

TRAGEDY.

BY THOMAS OTWAY.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRES-ROYAL
DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

By Permission of the Managers.

^{ss} The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation. ⁷⁸

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M DCC XCI.

VENICE 1785

A FLORENTINE

TRAGEDY

BY THOMAS OTWAY

ADAPTED

FOR THE STAGE

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE ROYAL

IN THE CITY OF LONDON

REPRESENTED BY THE ACTORS

OF THE THEATRE

OF THE CITY OF LONDON

IN 1785

Printed by J. Smith, in the Strand, near the Theatre Royal, in the City of London.

MDCCLXXXV

TO HER GRACE

THE
DUTCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.

MADAM,

WERE it possible for me to let the world know, how entirely your Grace's goodness has devoted a poor man to your service: were there words enough in speech to express the mighty sense I have of your great bounty towards me; surely I should write and talk of it for ever: but your Grace has given me so large a theme, and laid so very vast a foundation, that Imagination wants stock to build upon it. I am as one dumb, when I would speak of it: and, when I strive to write, I want a scale of thought sufficient to comprehend the height of it. Forgive me, then, Madam, if (as a poor peasant once made a present of an apple to an Emperor) I bring this small tribute, the humble growth of my little garden, and lay it at your feet. Believe it is paid you with the utmost gratitude: believe, that, so long as I have thought to remember how very much I owe your very generous nature, I will ever have a heart that shall be grateful for it too. Your Grace, next Heaven, deserves it amply from me:

that gave me life, but on a hard condition, till your extended favour taught me to prize the gift, and took the heavy burthen it was clogged with from me, I mean hard fortune. When I had enemies, that with malicious power kept back and shaded me from those royal beams, whose warmth is all I have, or hope to live by; your noble pity and compassion found me, where I was cast backward from my blessing, down in the rear of fortune, called me up, placed me in the shine, and I have felt its comfort. You have in that restored me to my native right: for a steady faith, and loyalty to my Prince, was all the inheritance my father left me; and, however hardly my ill fortune deal with me, 'tis what I prize so well, that I never pawn'd it yet, and hope I shall never part with it. Nature and Fortune were certainly in league, when you were born; and as the first took care to give you beauty enough to enslave the hearts of all the world; so the other resolv'd to do its merit justice, that none but a monarch fit to rule the world should e'er possess it; and in it had an empire. The young prince you have given him, by his blooming virtues, early declares the mighty stock he came from: and as you have taken all the pious care of a dear mother, and a prudent guardian, to give him a noble and generous education; may it succeed according to his merits and your wishes: may he grow up to be a bulwark to his illustrious father, and a patron to his loyal subjects; with wisdom and learning to assist him,

whenever called to his councils ; to defend his right against the incroachment of republicans in his senates ; to cherish such men as shall be able to vindicate the royal cause ; that good and fit servants to the crown may never be lost, for want of a protector. May he have courage and conduct fit to fight his battles abroad, and terrify his rebels at home : and, that all these may be yet more sure, may he never, during the spring time of his years, when those growing virtues ought with care to be cherished, in order to their ripening, may he never meet with vicious natures, or the tongues of faithless, sordid, insipid flatterers, to blast 'em. To conclude, may he be as great as the hand of Fortune (with his honour) shall be able to make him ; and may your Grace, who are so good a mistress, and so noble a patroness, never meet with a less grateful servant, than,

Madam,

Your Grace's

Entirely devoted Creature,

THO. OTWAY.

THOMAS OTWAY.

LITTLE is with any certainty known of the great Author of *VENICE PRESERVED*.—In the licentious days of Charles II. it is believed neither the *virtues* nor the *vices* of OTWAY were sufficiently prominent to distinguish him.

His father, Mr. HUMPHREY OTWAY, was the Rector of *Wolbeding* in Sussex—THOMAS the poet was born on the 3d of March, 1651. He was first sent to *Wickeham* School, and thence removed to Christ-Church, Oxford, of which he became a Commoner in 1669.

On leaving the University, the *histrionic* frenzy possessed him—He found the bent of his mind led him to the Theatre, but he mistook the part he was to perform there: instead of exciting emotions himself upon a stage, he was to furnish others with a *cue for passion*, as long as the language he spoke should exist. He made as an

Actor but one attempt, and in that he is said to have failed.

The army and Otway had as little congenial between them—He served in Flanders, but, versatile and facile, he soon became disgusted, and at length resolved to write for the Players—How well he succeeded, is impressed upon every heart.

Imprudence, however, is said to have left him never above want, and sometimes, it is reported, had plunged him into all its severities. We hear continually an idle reproach upon the ingratitude of an age which can suffer the indigence of Genius. But it should be considered that, for the most part, such dilemmas are voluntary inflictions, and that he has slender claims upon the sympathy of men, whom calamity cannot make wise, and whom pride prevents from soliciting relief.

OTWAY died in 1685; but, it is hoped, the wretched fate said to have attended him is fictitious—Nothing, however, can with any certainty be advanced respecting his *end*.

Few of the Professors of Literature offer so striking an example as Otway of the sublime

pre-eminence, and indiscreet abasement of
GENIUS.

His productions are as follow:—

Alcibiades,	Caius Marius,
Don Carlos,	Orphan,
Titus and Berenice,	Soldier's Fortune,
Cheats of Scapin,	Venice Preserved,
Friendship in Fashion,	Atheist.

VENICE PRESERVED;

OR,

A PLOT DISCOVERED.

Is a play evidently the result of acute remark upon the influence of passion on life. The Author seems to have consulted nature in his own mind, and unfortunately his own mind was corrupt.

Hence his characters, except indeed *Belvidera*, excite little sympathy at their fate.—The Traitor to his Country expires upon the wheel, and the Betrayer of his Friend is the *slayer of himself*.

In the works of some dramatists, there is danger lest Vice should wear the wreath of Virtue from the fascination of specious qualities—it is thus in the *School for Scandal*; where the character of Charles is a seducing *poison* to *our blood*.—Otway's Rascals are, however, sufficiently despised—PIERRE is sunken by cruel ambition—JAFFIER by meanness unmanly and contemptible. On the side of the *amor patriæ* he is paralytic—he can support the idea of destroying his Country, but poverty, the importunities of a wife, or

the reflections of treachery to a friend, agonize him with compunction and hurry him to despair.

BELVIDERA, unhappy, duteous, tender, and virtuous, claims our full commiseration, and claims it *alone*.

A RIOT DISCOVERED.

PROLOGUE.

*I*N these distracted times, when each man dreads
The bloody stratagems of busy heads :
Whence we had fear'd three years we know not what,
'Till witnesses began to die o' th' rot ;
What made our poet meddle with a plot ?
Was't that he fancy'd for the very sake
And name of plot, his trifling play might take ?
For there's not in't one inch-board evidence ;
But 'tis, he says, to reason plain and sense ;
And that he thinks a plausible defence.
Were truth by sense and reason to be try'd,
Sure all our swearers might be laid aside.
No ; of such tools our author has no need,
To make his plot, or make his play succeed ;
He of Black Bills has no prodigious tales,
Or Spanish pilgrims cast ashore in Wales :
Here's not one murder'd magistrate, at least,
Kept rank, like ven'son for a city feast,
Grown four days stiff, the better to prepare
And fit his pliant limbs to ride in chair.
Yet here's an army rais'd, tho' under ground,
But no man seen, nor one commission found :
Here is a traytor too, that's very old,
Turbulent, subtle, mischievous, and bold.

Bloody, revengeful, and—to crown his part,
Loves fumbling with a wench with all his heart :
'Till, after having many changes past,
In spite of age (thanks t' heav'n) is hang'd at last ;
Next is a senator that keeps a whore,
In Venice none a higher office bore,
To letw'dness ev'ry night the leacher ran ;
Shew me, all London, such another man ;
Match him at Mother Creswell's, if you can.
O Poland ! Poland ! had it been thy lot
T' have heard in time of this Venetian plot,
Thou surely chosen hadst one king from thence,
And honour'd them, as thou hast England since.

Committee on Education

DRURY, ALAN

Drury of Venice	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan

Drury, Alan

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Drury of Venice	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan
Drury	Drury, Alan

Drury, Alan

Two Women, attendants on Belvidera
The Council of the
Other, Guard, Brian, Executioner, and Apple

Dramatis Personae.

DRURY - LANE.

				<i>Men.</i>
DUKE of VENICE	-	-	-	Mr. Chaplin.
PRIULI	-	-	-	Mr. Aickin.
BEDAMAR	-	-	-	Mr. R. Palmer.
JAFFIER	-	-	-	Mr. Kemble.
PIERRE	-	-	-	Mr. Bensley.
RENAULT	} Conspirators {			Mr. Packer.
ELLIOTT				Mr. Fawcett.
SPINOSA				Mr. Benson.
THEODORE				Mr. Alfred.
				<i>Woman.</i>
BELVIDERA	-	-	-	Mrs. Siddons.

COVENT - GARDEN.

					<i>Men.</i>
DUKE of VENICE	-	-	-	-	Mr. Thompson.
PRIULI	-	-	-	-	Mr. Hull.
BEDAMAR	-	-	-	-	Mr. Davies.
JAFFIER	-	-	-	-	Mr. Holman.
PIERRE	-	-	-	-	Mr. Harley.
RENAULT	} Conspirators {				Mr. W. Powell.
ELLIOTT					Mr. Macready.
SPINOSA					Mr. Cubit.
THEODORE					Mr. Reeves.
					<i>Woman.</i>
BELVIDERA	-	-	-	-	Mrs. Esten.

Two Women, attendants on Belvidera.

The Council of ten.

Officer, Guard, Friar, Executioner, and Rabble.



VENICE PRESERVED.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Street in Venice. Enter PRIULI and JAFFIER.

Priuli.

No more! I'll hear no more! Begone and leave me.

Jaf. Not hear me! By my suffering but you shall!
My lord, my lord! I'm not that abject wretch
You think me. Patience! where's the distance throws
Me back so far, but I may boldly speak
In right, tho' proud oppression will not hear me?

Pri. Have you not wrong'd me?

Jaf. Could my nature e'er
Have brook'd injustice, or the doing wrongs,
I need not now thus low have bent myself
To gain a hearing from a cruel father.
Wrong'd you!

Pri. Yes, wrong'd me! In the nicest point,
The honour of my house, you've done me wrong,
You may remember (for I now will speak,
And urge its baseness) when you first came home
From travel, with such hopes as made you look'd on,
By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation;

Pleas'd with your growing virtue, I receiv'd you ;
Court'd, and sought to raise you to your merits : 20
My house my table, nay, my fortune too,
My very self was yours; you might have us'd me
To your best service ; like an open friend
I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine :
When, in requital of my best endeavours,
You treacherously practis'd to undo me ;
Seduc'd the weakness of my age's darling,
My only child, and stole her from my bosom.
Oh Belvidera !

Jaf. 'Tis to me you owe her :
Childless you had been else, and in the grave
Your name extinct ; no more Priuli heard of.
You may remember, scarce five years are past,
Since in your brigantine you sail'd to see
The Adriatick wedded by our Duke ;
And I was with you : your unskilful pilot
Dash'd us upon a rock ; when to your boat
You made for safety : enter'd first your self ;
Th' affrighted Belvidera following next,
As she stood trembling on the vessel's side,
Was, by a wave, wash'd off into the deep ;
When instantly I plung'd into the sea,
And buffeting the billows to her rescue,
Redeem'd her life with half the loss of mine.
Like a rich conquest, in one hand I bore her,
And with the other dash'd the saucy waves,
That throng'd and press'd to rob me of my prize.
I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms :

Indeed you thank'd me ; but a nobler gratitude
Rose in her soul : for from that hour she lov'd me,
'Till for her life she paid me with herself.

Pri. You stole her from me ; like a thief you stole
her,

At dead of night ! that cursed hour you chose
To rifle me of all my heart held dear.

May all your joys in her prove false, like mine ;

A sterile fortune, and a barren bed,

Attend you both ; continual discord make

Your days and nights bitter and grievous : still

May the hard hand of a vexatious need

Oppress and grind you ; till at last you find 60

The curse of disobedience all your portion.

Jaf. Half of your curse you have bestow'd in vain ;
Heav'n has already crown'd our faithful loves

With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty :

May he live to prove more gentle than his grandsire,

And happier than his father.

Pri. Rather live
To bait thee for his bread, and din your ears
With hungry cries ; whilst his unhappy mother
Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want.

Jaf. You talk as if 'twould please you.

Pri. 'Twould, by heav'n !

“ Once she was dear indeed ; the drops that fell

“ From my sad heart, when she forgot her duty,

“ The fountain of my life was not so precious—

“ But she is gone, and, if I am a man,

“ I will forget her.”

Jaf. Would I were in my grave ?

Pri. And she too with thee :

For, living here, you're but my curs'd remembrancers.
I once was happy. 81

Jaf. You use me thus, because you know my soul
Is fond of Belvidera. You perceive
My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat me.

Oh ! could my soul ever have known satiety ;
Were I that thief, the doer of such wrongs
As you upbraid me with, what hinders me
But I might send her back to you with contumely,
And court my fortune where she would be kinder ?

Pri. You dare not do't.

Jaf. Indeed, my Lord, I dare not.
My heart, that awes me, is too much my master :
Three years are past, since first our vows were plighted,
During which time, the world must bear me witness,
I've treated Belvidera like your daughter,
The daughter of a senator of Venice :
Distinction, place, attendance, and observance,
Due to her birth, she always has commanded.
Out of my little fortune I've done this ;
Because (tho' hopeless e'er to win your nature)
The world might see I lov'd her for herself ;
Not as the heiress of the great Priuli.

Pri. No more.

Jaf. Yes, all, and then adieu for ever.
There's not a wretch, that lives on common charity,
But's happier than me : for I have known
The luscious sweets of plenty ; every night

Have slept with soft content about my head,
And never wak'd, but to a joyful morning :
Yet now must fall, like a full ear of corn,
Whose blossom 'scap'd, yet's wither'd in the ripening.

Pri. Home, and be humble ; study to retrench ;
Discharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,
Those pageants of thy folly :
Reduce the glitt'ring trappings of thy wife
To humble weeds, fit for thy little state :
Then, to some suburb cottage both retire ;
Drudge to feed loathsome life ; get brats and starve—
Home, home, I say.— [Exit.

Jaf. Yes, if my heart would let me——
This proud, this swelling heart : home I would go,
But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,
Fill'd and damm'd up with gaping creditors.
“ Watchful as fowlers when their game will spring.”
I've now not fifty ducats in the world,
Yet still I am in love, and pleas'd with ruin,
Oh! Belvidera! Oh! she is my wife——
And we will bear our wayward fate together,
But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. My friend, good morrow.
How fares the honest partner of my heart ?
What, melancholy! not a word to spare me?
Jaf. I'm thinking, Pierre, how that damn'd starv-
ing quality,
Call'd honesty, got footing in the world.

Pier. Why, powerful villany first set it up,
For its own ease and safety. Honest men
Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves
Repose and fatten. Were all mankind villains,
They'd starve each other; lawyers would want practice,
Cut-throats rewards: each man would kill his
brother
Himself; none would be paid or hang'd for murder.
Honesty! 'twas a cheat invented first 142
To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,
That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,
And lord it uncontroul'd above their betters.

Jaf. Then honesty is but a notion?

Pier. Nothing else;
Like wit, much talk'd of, not to be defin'd?
He that pretends to most, too, has least share in't.
'Tis a ragged virtue: Honesty! no more on't.

Jaf. Sure thou art honest?

Pier. So, indeed, men think me;
But they are mistaken, Jaffier: I am a rogue
As well as they;
A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain as thou seest me.
'Tis true, I pay my debts, when they're contracted;
I steal from no man; would not cut a throat
To gain admission to a great man's purse,
Or a whore's bed; I'd not betray my friend
To get his place or fortune; I scorn to flatter 160
A blown-up fool above me, or crush the wretch beneath me;

Yet, Jaffier, for all this I am a villain.

Jaf. A villain!

Pier. Yes, a most notorious villain;

To see the sufferings of my fellow-creatures.

And own myself a man: to see our senators

Cheat the deluded people with a shew

Of liberty, which yet they ne'er must taste of.

They say, by them our hands are free from fetters;

Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds;

Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow;

Drive us, like wrecks, down the rough tide of power,

Whilst no hold's left to save us from destruction.

All that bear this are villains, and I one,

Not to rouse up at the great call of nature,

And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,

That make us slaves, and tell us, 'tis our charter.

Jaf. "Oh, Aquilina! Friend to lose such beauty.

"The dearest purchase of thy noble labours!

"She was thy right by conquest, as by love. 180

Pier. "Oh! Jaffier! I had so fix'd my heart upon
her,

"That, wheresoe'er I fram'd a scheme of life,

"For time to come, she was my only joy,

"With which I wish'd to sweeten future cares:

"I fancy'd pleasures; none but one that loves

"And doats as I did, can imagine like 'em:

"When in th' extremity of all these hopes,

"In the most charming hour of expectation,

"Then, when our eager wishes soar'd the highest,

"Ready to stoop and grasp the lovely game,

“ A haggard owl, a worthless kite of prey,
“ With his foul wings, sail’d in, and spoil’d my quarry,
Jaf. “ I know the wretch, and scorn him as thou
 hat’st him.

Pier. “ Curse on the common good that’s so pro-
 tected,

“ Where every slave, that heaps up wealth enough
“ To do much wrong, becomes the lord of right !
“ I, who believ’d no ill could e’er come near me,
“ Found in th’ embraces of my Aquilina
“ A wretched, old, but itching senator ;
“ A wealthy fool, that had bought out my title ; 200
“ A rogue that uses beauty like a lamb-skin,
“ Barely to keep him warm ; that filthy cuckoo too
“ Was, in my absence, crept into my nest,
“ And spoiling all my brood of noble pleasure.

Jaf. “ Didst thou not chase him thence ?

Pier. “ I did, and drove
“ The rank old bearded Hirco stinking home.
“ The matter was complain’d of in the senate,
“ I summon’d to appear, and censur’d basely,
“ For violating something they call’d privilege——
“ This was the recompence of all my service.
“ Would I’d been rather beaten by a coward !
“ A soldier’s mistress, Jaffier, is his religion ;
“ When that’s profan’d, all other ties are broken :
“ That even dissolves all former bonds of service ;
“ And from that hour I think myself as free
“ To be the foe, as e’er the friend of Venice—
“ Nay, dear revenge, whene’er thou call’st I’m ready.”

Jaf. I think no safety can be here for virtue,
And grieve, my friend, as much as thou, to live 220
In such a wretched state as this of Venice,
Where all agree to spoil the public good;
And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

Pier. We've neither safety, unity, nor peace,
For the foundation's lost of common good;
Justice is lame, as well as blind, amongst us;
The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)
Serve but for instruments of some new tyranny,
That every day starts up, t'enslave us deeper.
Now could this glorious cause but find out friends
To do it right, Oh, Jaffier! then might'st thou
Not wear these seals of woe upon thy face;
The proud Priuli should be taught humanity,
And learn to value such a son as thou art.
I dare not speak, but my heart bleeds this moment.

Jaf. Curs'd be the cause, tho' I thy friend be part
on't :

Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom,
For I am us'd to mis'ry, and perhaps
May find a way to sweeten 't to thy spirit.

Pier. Too soon 'twill reach thy knowledge——

Jaf. Then from thee 241
Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendship,
Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing,
Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

Pier. Then thou art ruin'd!

Jaf. That I long since knew;
I and ill fortune have been long acquainted.

Pier. I pass'd this very moment by thy doors,
And found them guarded by a troop of villains;
The sons of public rapine were destroying.
They told me, by the sentence of the law,
They had commission to seize all thy fortune:
Nay, more, Priuli's cruel hand had sign'd it.
Here stood a ruffian with a horrid face,
Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,
Tumbled into a heap for public sale;
There was another making villanous jests
At thy undoing: he had ta'en possession
Of all thy ancient, most domestic ornaments,
Rich hangings intermix'd and wrought with gold;
The very bed, which on thy wedding-night
Receiv'd thee to the arms of Belvidera,
The scene of all thy joys was violated
By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,
And thrown amongst the common lumber.

Jaf. Now thank heaven——

Pier. Thank heaven! for what?

Jaf. That I'm not worth a ducat.

Pier. Curse thy dull stars, and the worse fate of
Venice,

Where brothers, friends, and fathers, all are false;
Where there's no truth, no trust; where innocence
Stoops under vile oppression, and vice lords it.
Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last
Thy beauteous Belvidera, like a wretch
That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping forth,
“Shining thro' tears, like April-suns in showers,

“ That labour to o’ercome the cloud that loads ’em ;
Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she lean’d,
Kindly look’d up, and at her grief grew sad,
As if they catch’d the sorrows that fell from her ; 280
Ev’n the lewd rabble, that were gather’d round
To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her ;
Govern’d their roaring throats, and grumbled pity ;
I could have hugg’d the greasy rogues : they pleas’d
me.

Jaf. I thank thee for this story, from my soul ;
Since now I know the worst that can befall me.
Ah, Pierre ! I have a heart that could have borne
The roughest wrong my fortune could have done me ;
But when I think what Belvidera feels,
The bitterness her tender spirit tastes of,
I own myself a coward : bear my weakness :
If throwing thus my arms about thy neck,
I play the boy, and blubber in thy bosom.
Oh ! I shall drown thee with my sorrows.

Pier. Burn,
First, burn and level Venice to thy ruin.
What ! starve, like beggars’ brats, in frosty weather,
Under a hedge, and whine ourselves to death !
Thou or thy cause, shall never want assistance,
Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee :
Command my heart, thou’rt every way its master.

Jaf. No, there’s a secret pride in bravely dying.

Pier. Rats die in holes and corners, dogs run mad ;
Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow :
Revenge, the attribute of gods ; they stamp’d it,

With their great image, on our natures. Die!
Consider well the cause, that calls upon thee :
And, if thou'rt base enough, die then. Remember,
Thy Belvidera suffers; Belvidera !
Die—damn first—What ! be decently interr'd
In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave dust
With stinking rogues, that rot in winding-sheets,
Surfeit-slain fools, the common dung o' th' soil !

Jaf. Oh !

Pier. Well said, out with't, swear a little——

Jaf. Swear ! By sea and air ; by earth, by Heav'n
and hell,

I will revenge my Belvidera's tears.

Hark thee, my friend—Priuli—is—a senator.

Pier. A dog.

Jaf. Agreed.

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Pier. Shoot him.

Jaf. With all my heart.

No more ; where shall we meet at night ?

Pier. I'll tell thee ;

On the Rialto, every night at twelve,

I take my evening's walk of meditation ;

There we two will meet, and talk of precious

Mischief——

Jaf. Farewel.

Pier. At twelve.

Jaf. At any hour ; my plagues
Will keep me waking.

[Exit Pierre.

Tell me why, good Heaven,

Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,

Aspiring thoughts, and elegant desires,
That fill the happiest man? Ah, rather, why
Didst thou not form me sordid as my fate,
Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burthens?
Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me?
Is this just dealing, Nature?—Belvidera!

Enter BELVIDERA.

Poor Belvidera!

Bel. Lead me, lead me, my virgins,
To that kind voice. My lord, my love, my refuge!
Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face!
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating
At sight of thee, and bound with sprightly joys.
Oh smile! as when our loves were in their spring,
And cheer my fainting soul.

Jaf. As when our loves
Were in their spring! Has then our fortune chang'd?
Art thou not Belvidera, still the same,
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee?
If thou art alter'd, where shall I have harbour?
Where ease my loaded heart? Oh! where complain?

Bel. Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,
With all the resolution of strong truth!
Beats not my heart, as 'twould alarum thine
To a new charge of bliss?—I joy more in thee,
Than did thy mother, when she hugg'd thee first,
And bless'd the Gods for all her travail past.

Jaf. Can there in woman be such glorious faith?
Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false!
Oh woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man: we had been brutes without you!
Angels are painted fair to look like you:
There's in you all that we believe of Heaven;
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

Bel. If love be treasure, we'll be wondrous rich;
I have so much, my heart will surely break with't:
Vows can't express it. When I would declare
How great's my joy, I'm dumb with the big thought;
I swell, and sigh, and labour with my longing.
O! lead me to some desert wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
May have its vent, where I may tell aloud
To the high Heavens, and ev'ry list'ning planet,
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught;
Where I may throw my eager arms about thee, 380
Give loose to love, with kisses kindling joy,
And let off all the fire that's in my heart.

Jaf. Oh, Belvidera! doubly I'm a beggar:
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee.
Want, worldly want, that hungry meagre fiend,
Is at my heels, and chases me in view.
Canst thou bear cold and hunger? Can these limbs,
Fram'd for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty?
When banish'd by our miseries abroad
(As suddenly we shall be) to seek out
In some far climate, where our names are strangers,

For charitable succour ; wilt thou then,
 When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
 And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads ;
 Wilt thou then talk thus to me ? Wilt thou then
 Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love ?

Bel. Oh ! I will love thee, even in madness love
 thee ;

Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,
 I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart 400
 Should 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.
 Tho' the bare earth be all our resting-place,
 Its roots our food, some clift our habitation,
 I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head ;
 And, as thou sighing ly'st, and swell'd with sorrow,
 Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
 Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest ;
 Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

Jaf. Hear this, you Heav'ns ! and wonder how you
 made her :

Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world,
 Busy rebellion ne'er will let you know
 Tranquility and happiness like mine !
 Like gaudy ships th' obsequious billows fall,
 And rise again, to lift you in your pride ;
 They wait but for a storm, and then devour you ;
 I, in my private bark already wreck'd,
 Like a poor merchant driven to unknown land,
 That had by chance pack'd up his choicest treasure
 In one dear casket, and sav'd only that ; 419
 Since I must wander further on the shore,

Thus hug my little, but my precious store,
Resolv'd to scorn and trust my fate no more. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

“ *Enter PIERRE and AQUILINA.*

“ *Aquilina.*

“ BY all thy wrongs, thou’rt dearer to my arms

“ Than all the wealth of Venice. Pr’ythee stay,

“ And let us love to-night.”

“ *Pier.* No: there’s fool,

“ There’s fool about thee. When a woman sells

“ Her flesh to fools, her beauty’s lost to me ;

“ They leave a taint, a sully—where they’ve pass’d ;

“ There’s such a baneful quality about ’em,

“ E’en spoils complexions with their nauseousness ;

“ They infect all they touch: I cannot think

“ Of tasting any thing a fool has pall’d.

“ *Aqui.* I loath and scorn that fool thou mean’st, as
much

“ Or more than thou canst ; but the beast has gold,

“ That makes him necessary ; power too,

“ To qualify my character, and poise me

“ Equal with peevish virtue, that beholds

“ My liberty with envy. In their hearts

“ They’re loose as I am ; but an ugly power

“ Sits in their faces, and frights pleasure from them.

“ *Pier.* Much good may't do you, madam, with
your senator. 20

“ *Aqui.* My senator! Why, canst thou think that
wretch

“ E'er fill'd thy Aquilina's arms with pleasure?

“ Think'st thou, because I sometimes give him leave

“ To foil himself at what he is unfit for;

“ Because I force myself t'endure and suffer him,

“ Think'st thou, I love him? No, by all the joys

“ Thou ever gav'st me, his presence is my penance.

“ The worst thing an old man can be's a lover,

“ A mere *memento mori* to poor woman.

“ I never lay by his decrepid side,

“ But all that night I ponder on my grave.

“ *Pier.* Would he were well sent thither.

“ *Aqui.* That's my wish too:

“ For then, my Pierre, I might have cause, with
pleasure,

“ To play the hypocrite. Oh! how I could weep

“ Over the dying dotard, and kiss him too,

“ In hopes to smother him quite; then, when the time

“ Was come to pay my sorrows at his funeral,

“ (For he has already made me heir to treasures

“ Would make me out-act a real widow's whining)

“ How could I frame my face to fit my mourning!

“ With wringing hands attend him to his grave;

“ Fall swooning on his hearse; take mad possession

“ E'en of the dismal vault, where he lay buried;

“ There, like th' Ephesian matron, dwell, till thou,

“ My lovely soldier, com'st to my deliverance;

“ Then, throwing up my veil, with open arms

“ And laughing eyes, run to new-dawning joy.

“ *Pier.* No more : I’ve friends to meet me here to-night,

“ And must be private. As you prize my friendship,

“ Keep up your coxcomb ; let him not pry, nor listen,

“ Nor frisk about the house, as I have seen him,

“ Like a tame mumping squirrel with a bell on ;

“ Curs will be abroad to bite him, if you do.

“ *Aqui.* What friends to meet ! Mayn’t I be of your council ?

“ *Pier.* How ! a woman ask questions out of bed !

Go to your senator ; ask him what passes

“ Amongst his brethren ; he’ll hide nothing from you :

“ But pump me not for politics. No more !

“ Give order, that whoever in my name 60

“ Comes here, receive admittance. So good night.

“ *Aqui.* Must we ne’er meet again ! embrace no more ?

“ Is love so soon and utterly forgotten ?

“ *Pier.* As you henceforward treat your fool, I’ll think on’t.

“ *Aqui.* Curs’d be all fools—I die, if he forsakes me ;

“ And how to keep him, Heaven or hell instruct me.”

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Rialto. Enter JAFFIER.

Jaf. I'm here; and thus, the shades of night around
me,

I look as if all hell were in my heart,

And I in hell. Nay surely 'tis so with me!—

For every step I tread, methinks some fiend

Knocks at my breast, and bids me not be quiet.

I've heard how desperate wretches, like myself,

Have wander'd out at this dead time of night,

To meet the foe of mankind in his walk.

Sure I'm so curs'd that, tho' of Heav'n forsaken,

No minister of darkness cares to tempt me.

Hell, hell! why sleep'st thou?

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. Sure I've staid too long:

The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.

Speak, who goes there?

Jaf. A dog, that comes to howl

At yonder moon. What's he, that asks the question?

Pier. A friend to dogs, for they are honest crea-
tures,

And ne'er betray their masters: never fawn

On any that they love not. Well met, friend:

Jaffier!

Jaf. The same. "O Pierre, thou'rt come in season,

"I was just going to pray.

Pier. “ Ah; that’s mechanic ;
“ Priests make a trade on’t, and yet starve by’t, too.
“ No praying ; it spoils business, and time’s precious.
Where’s Belvidera ?——

Jaf. For a day or two
I’ve lodg’d her privately, till I see farther
What fortune will do for me. Pr’ythee, friend,
If thou would’st have me fit to hear good counsel,
Speak not of Belvidera——

Pier. Not of her !

Jaf. Oh, no !

Pier. Not name her ? May be I wish her well. 100

Jaf. Whom well ?

Pier. Thy wife ; thy lovely Belvidera.
I hope a man may wish his friend’s wife well,
And no harm done.

Jaf. Y’are merry, Pierre.

Pier. I am so :
Thou shalt smile too, and Belvidera smile :
We’ll all rejoice. Here’s something to buy pins ;
Marriage is chargeable. [*Gives him a purse.*]

Jaf. I but half wish’d
To see the devil, and he’s here already. Well !
What must this buy ? Rebellion, murder, treason ?
Tell me, which way I must be damn’d for this.

Pier. When last we parted, we’d no qualms like
these,
But entertain’d each other’s thoughts like men
Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world
Reform’d since our last meeting ? What new miracles

Have happen'd ? Has Priuli's heart relented ?
Can he be honest ?

Jaf. Kind Heav'n, let heavy curses
Gall his old age ; cramps, aches rack his bones,
And bitterest disquiet ring his heart.

“ Oh ! let him live, till life become his burden :

“ Let him groan under't long, linger an age

“ In the worst agonies and pangs of death,

“ And find its ease, but late.”

Pier. Nay, could'st thou not
As well, my friend, have stretch'd the curse to all
The senate round, as to one single villain ?

Jaf. But curses stick not : Could I kill with cursing,
By Heaven I know not thirty heads in Venice
Should not be blasted. Senators should rot
Like dogs on dunghills : “ But their wives and
daughters

“ Die of their own diseases.” Oh ! for a curse
To kill with !

Pier. Daggers, daggers are much better.

Jaf. Ha !

Pier. Daggers.

Jaf. But where are they ?

Pier. Oh ! a thousand

May be dispos'd of, in honest hands, in Venice.

Jaf. Thou talk'st in clouds.

Pier. But yet a heart, half wrong'd
As thine has been, would find the meaning, Jaffier.

Jaf. A thousand daggers, all in honest hands !
And have not I a friend will stick one here !

Pier. Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be cherish'd
T'a nobler purpose, I would be thy friend;
But thou hast better friends; friends whom thy
wrongs

Have made thy friends; friends worthy to be call'd so.
I'll trust thee with a secret: There are spirits
This hour at work.—But as thou art a man,
Whom I have pick'd and chosen from the world,
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter;
And when I've told thee that which only gods,
And men like gods, are privy to, then swear
No chance or change shall wrest it from thy bosom.

Jaf. When thou would'st bind me, is there need
of oaths?

“Green-sickness girls lose maidenheads with such
counters.”

For thou'rt so near my heart, that thou may'st see
Its bottom, sound its strength and firmness to thee.
Is coward, fool, or villain in my face?

If I seem none of these, I dare believe

Thou would'st not use me in a little cause,
For I am fit for honour's toughest task,
Nor ever yet found fooling was my province;
And for a villanous, inglorious enterprize,
I know thy heart so well, I dare lay mine
Before thee, set it to what point thou wilt.

Pier. Nay, 'tis a cause thou wilt be fond of, Jaffier;
For it is founded on the noblest basis;
Our liberties, our natural inheritance.
There's no religion, no hypocrisy in't;

We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't;
Openly act a deed the world shall gaze
With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.

Jaf. For liberty!

Pier. For liberty, my friend.

Thou shalt be freed from base Priuli's tyranny,
And thy sequester'd fortunes heal'd again: 180
I shall be free from those opprobrious wrongs,
That press me now, and bend my spirit downward;
All Venice free, and every growing merit
Succeed to its just right: fools shall be pull'd
From wisdom's seat: those baleful unclean birds,
Those lazy owls, who, perch'd near fortune's top,
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings
To cuff down new-fledg'd virtues, that would rise
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

Jaf. What can I do?

Pier. Canst thou not kill a senator?

Jaf. Were there one wise or honest, I could kill
him,

For herding with that nest of fools and knaves.
By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge
Were to be had; and the brave story warms me.

Pier. Swear then!

Jaf. I do, by all those glittering stars,
And yon great ruling planet of the night;
By all good pow'rs above, and ill below;
By love and friendship, dearer than my life, 200
No pow'r or death shall make me false to thee.

Pier. Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.
A council's held hard by, where the destruction
Of this great empire's hatching: there I'll lead thee.
But be a man! for thou'rt to mix with men
Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,
And rule it when it's wildest——

Jaf. I give thee thanks
For this kind warning. Yes, I'll be a man;
And charge thee, Pierre, whene'er thou see'st my
fears

Betray me less, to rip this heart of mine
Out of my breast, and shew it for a coward's.
Come, let's be gone, for from this hour I chase
All little thoughts, all tender human follies
Out of my bosom: Vengeance shall have room:
Revenge!

Pier. And liberty!

Jaf. Revenge! revenge——— [Exeunt.

SCENE III.

Changes to Aquilina's House, the Greek Courtezan.

Enter RENAULT.

Ren. Why was my choice ambition? the worst
ground
A wretch can build on! It's, indeed at distance, 220
A goodly prospect, tempting to the view;
The height delights us, and the mountain top

Looks beautiful, because it's nigh to Heav'n,
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation,
What storm will batter, and what tempest shake us.
Who's there?

Enter SPINOSA.

Spin. Renault, good-morrow, for by this time
I think the scale of night has turn'd the balance,
And weighs up morning? Has the clock struck
twelve?

Ren. Yes; Clocks will go as they are set: but man,
Irregular man's ne'er constant, never certain:
I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness
In waiting dull attendance; 'tis the curse
Of diligent virtue to be mix'd, like mine,
With giddy tempers, souls but half resolv'd.

Spin. Hell seize that soul amongst us it can frighten.

Ren. What's then the cause that I am here alone?
Why are we not together?

Enter ELIOT.

O, Sir, welcome!

You are an Englishman: when treason's hatching,
One might have thought you'd not have been behind-
hand.

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In what whore's lap have you been lolling?

Give but an Englishman his whore and ease,
Beef, and a sea-coal fire, he's yours for ever.

Eli. Frenchman, you are saucy.

Ren. How!

*Enter BEDAMAR the Ambassador, THEODORE, BRAM-
VEIL, DURAND, BRABE, REVILLIDO, MEZZANA,
TERNON, RETROSI, Conspirators.*

Bed. At difference ; fie !

Is this a time for quarrels ? Thieves and rogues
Fall out and brawl : should men of your high calling,
Men separated by the choice of Providence
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here
In this assembly as in one great jewel,
T'adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smil'd on ;
Should you, like boys, wrangle for trifles ?

Ren. Boys !

Bed. Renault, thy hand.

Ren. I thought I'd given my heart
Long since to every man that mingles here ;
But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers,
That can't forgive my froward age its weakness.

Ben. Eliot, thou once had'st virtue. I have seen
Thy stubborn temper bent with god-like goodness,
Not half thus courted : 'Tis thy nation's glory
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.
One more embrace, my friends—we'll all embrace.
United thus, we are the mighty engine
Must twist this rooted empire from its basis.
Totters not it already ?

Eli. Would 'twere tumbling.

Bed. Nay, it shall down ; this night we seal its
ruin.

Enter PIERRE.

Oh, Pierre ! thou art welcome.
Come to my breast, for by its hopes thou look'st
Lovely dreadful, and the fate of Venice
Seems on thy sword already. Oh, my Mars !
The poets that first feign'd a god of war,
Sure prophesy'd of thee.

Pier. Friend, was not Brutus,
(I mean that Brutus, who in open senate
Stabb'd the first Cæsar that usurp'd the world)
A gallant man ; 280

Ren. Yes, and Catiline too ;
Tho' story wrong his fame : for he conspir'd
To prop the reeling glory of his country :
His cause was good.

Bed. And our's as much above it,
As, Renault, thou'rt superior to Cethegus,
Or Pierre to Cassius.

Pier. Then to what we aim at.
When do we start ? or must we talk for ever ?

Bed. No, Pierre, the deed's near birth ; fate seems
to have set
The business up, and given it to our care ;
I hope there's not a heart or hand amongst us,
But is firm and ready.

All. All.
We'll die with Bedamar.

Bed. O men
Matchless ! as will your glory be hereafter :

The game is for a matchless prize, if won ;
If lost, disgraceful ruin.

“ *Ren.* What can lose it ?

“ The public stock’s a beggar ; one Venetian
“ Trusts not another. Look into their stores
“ Of general safety ; empty magazines,
“ A tatter’d fleet, a murmuring unpaid army,
“ Bankrupt nobility, a harrass’d commonalty,
“ A factious, giddy, and divided senate,
“ Is all the strength of Venice : let’s destroy it ;
“ Let’s fill their magazines with arms to awe them ;
“ Man out their fleet, and make their trade maintain
it ;
“ Let loose the murmuring army on their masters,
“ To pay themselves with plunder ; lop their nobles
“ To the base roots whence most of ’em first sprung ;
“ Enslave the rout, whom smarting will make humble
“ Turn out their droning senate and possess
“ That seat of empire which our souls were fram’d
for.”

Pier. Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,
Commanded all by leaders fit to guide
A battle for the freedom of the world :
This wretched state has starv’d them in its service ;
And, by your bounty quicken’d, they’re resolved
To serve your glory, and revenge their own :
They’ve all their different quarters in this city,
Watch for th’ alarm, and grumble ’tis so tardy.

Bed. I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied dili-
gence

Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease ;
After this night it is resolv'd we meet
No more, till Venice owns us for her lords.

Pier. How lovelily the Adriatic whore,
Dress'd in her flames, will shine ? Devouring flames !
Such as shall burn her to the watery bottom,
And hiss in her foundation.

Bed. Now if any
Amongst us, that owns this glorious cause,
Have friends or interest he'd wish to save,
Let it be told : the general doom is seal'd ;
But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

Pier. I must confess, you there have touch'd my
weakness,
I have a friend ; hear it ! such a friend,
My heart was ne'er shut to him. Nay, I'll tell you :
He knows the very business of this hour ;
But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it :
We've chang'd a vow to live and die together,
And he's at hand to ratify it here.

Ren. How ! all betray'd !

Pier. No—I've nobly dealt with you ;
I've brought my all into the public stock :
I've but one friend, and him I'll share amongst you :
Receive and cherish him ; or if, when seen
And search'd, you find him worthless ; as my tongue
Has lodg'd this secret in his faithful breast,
To ease your fears, I wear a dagger here

Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.
Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boast of.

Enter JAFFIER, with a Dagger.

Bed. His presence bears the shew of manly virtue.

Jaf. I know you'll wonder all, that thus uncall'd,
I dare approach this place of fatal councils ;
But I'm amongst you, and by heav'n it glads me
To see so many virtues thus united
To restore justice, and dethrone oppression.
Command this sword, if you would have it quiet,
Into this breast ; but, if you think it worthy
To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,
Send me into the curs'd assembled senate :
It shrinks not, tho' I meet a father there.
Would you behold this city flaming ? here's
A hand shall bear a lighted torch at noon
To th' arsenal, and set its gates on fire.

Ren. You talk this well, Sir.

Jaf. Nay——by Heaven I'll do this.
Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces :
You fear me a villain, and, indeed, it's odd
To hear a stranger talk thus, at first meeting,
Of matters that have been so well debated ;
But ! I come ripe with wrongs, as you with councils.
I hate this senate, am a foe to Venice ;
A friend to none, but men resolv'd like me
To push on mischief. Oh ! did you but know me,
I need not talk thus !

Bed. Pierre, I must embrace him. 380

My heart beats to this man, as if it knew him.

Ren. I never lov'd these huggers.

Jaf. Still I see
The cause delights ye not. Your friends survey me
As I were dangerous——But I come arm'd
Against all doubts, and to your trust will give
A pledge, worth more than all the world can pay for.
My Belvidera. Hoa; my Belvidera!

Bed. What wonder's next?

Jaf. Let me entreat you,
As I have henceforth hopes to call you friends,
That all but the ambassador, and this
Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns me,
Withdraw a while, to spare a woman's blushes.

[*Exeunt all but BED. REN. JAF. PIER.*

Enter BELVIDERA.

Bed. Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

Jaf. My Belvidera! Belvidera!

Bel. Who,

Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?
That voice was wont to come in gentle whispers,
And fill my ears with the soft breath of love. 400
Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?

Jaf. Indeed 'tis late.

Bel. Oh! I have slept and dreamt,

“And dreamt again. Where hast thou been, thou
loiterer?

“Tho' my eyes clos'd, my arms have still been open'd:

“Stretch'd every way betwixt my broken slumbers,

“ To search if thou wert come to crown my rest :
“ There’s no repose without thee : Oh ! the day
“ Too soon will break, and wake us to our sorrow.
“ Come, come to bed, and bid thy cares good night.

Jaf. “ Oh Belvidera ! we must change the scene,
“ In which the past delights of life were tasted :
“ The poor sleep little ; we must learn to watch
“ Our labours late, and early every morning ;
“ ’Midst winter frosts, thin clad, and fed with sparing,
“ Rise to our toils, and drudge away the day.”

Bel. Alas ! where am I ! whither is’t you lead me ?
Methinks I read distraction in your face,
Something less gentle than the fate you tell me.
You shake and tremble too ! your blood runs cold !
Heav’ns guard my love, and bless his heart with pa-
tience.

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Jaf. That I have patience, let our fate bear witness,
Who has ordain’d it so, that thou and I,
(Thou, the divinest good man e’er possess’d,
And I, the wretched’st of the race of man)
This very hour, without one tear, must part.

Bel. Part ! must we part ? Oh, am I then forsaken ?
“ Will my love cast me off ? Have my misfortunes
“ Offended him so highly, that he’ll leave me ?”
Why drag you from me ; Whither are you going
My dear ! my life ! my love !

Jaf. Oh, friends !

Bel. Speak to me.

Jaf. Take her from my heart,
She’ll gain such hold else, I shall ne’er get loose.

I charge thee—take her, but with tender'st care
Relieve her troubles, and assuage her sorrows,

Ren. Rise, Madam, and command amongst your
servants.

Jaf. To you, Sirs, and your honours I bequeath her,
And with her this; when I prove unworthy——

[*Gives a Dagger.*

You know the rest——Then strike it to her heart;
And tell her, he who three whole happy years
Lay in her arms, and each kind night repeated
The passionate vows of still increasing love,
Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

Bel. Nay, take my life, since he has sold it cheaply;
“ Or send me to some distant clime your slave;
“ But let it be far off, lest my complainings
“ Should reach his guilty ears, and shake his peace.

Jaf. “ No, Belvidera, I've contriv'd thy honour.
“ Trust to my faith, and be but fortune kind
“ To me, as I'll preserve that faith unbroken;
“ When next we meet, I'll lift thee to a height
“ Shall gather all the gazing world about thee,
“ To wonder what strange virtue plac'd thee there.
“ But if we ne'er meet more.”

Bel. O! thou unkind one;
Ne'er meet more! have I deserv'd this from you;
Look on me, tell me, speak, thou fair deceiver.
Why am I separated from thy love?

If I am false, accuse me, but if true,
Don't, pr'ythee don't, in poverty forsake me,
But pity the sad heart that's torn with parting.

Yet hear me, yet recall me—

[*Exeunt REN. BED. and BEL.*]

Jaf. Oh! “my eyes,
“Look not that way, but turn yourselves a while
“Into my heart, and be wean’d altogether.”
My friend, where art thou?

Pier. Here, my honour’s brother.

Jaf. Is Belvidera gone?

Pier. Renault has led her
Back to her own apartment; but by Heav’n,
Thou must not see her more, till our work’s over.

Jaf. No!

Pier. Not for your life.

Jaf. Oh, Pierre, wert thou but she,
How I would pull thee down into my heart,
Gaze on thee, till my eye-strings crack’d with love;
“Till all my sinews, with its fire extended,
“Fix’d me upon the rack of ardent longing” : 480
Then, swelling, sighing, raging to be blest,
Come, like a panting turtle to thy breast;
On thy soft bosom hovering, bill and play,
Confess the cause why last I fled away;
Own ’twas a fault, but swear to give it o’er,
And never follow false ambition more. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III. SCENE I.

“ *Enter AQUILINA and her Maid.*

“ *Aquilina.*

“ TELL him I am gone to bed ; tell him I am not at
“ home ; tell him I’ve better company with me, or
“ any thing ; tell him, in short, I will not see him,
“ the eternal troublesome vexatious fool : He’s worse
“ company than an ignorant physician—I’ll not be
“ disturb’d at these unseasonable hours.

“ *Maid.* But, madam ! He’s here already, just en-
“ ter’d the doors.

“ *Aqui.* Turn him out again, you unnecessary,
“ useless, giddy-brain’d ass : If he will not be gone,
“ set the house a fire, and burn us both : I’d rather
“ meet a toad in my dish, than that old hideous ani-
“ mal in my chamber to-night. 13

Enter ANTONIO.

“ *Ant.* Nacky, Nacky, Nacky——How dost do,
“ Nacky ? Hurry, durry. I am come, little Nacky ;
“ past eleven o’clock, a late hour ; time in all con-
“ science to go to bed, Nacky——Nacky, did I say ?
“ Ay, Nacky, Aquilina, lina, lina, quilina, quilina,
“ quilina, Aquilina, Naquilina, Naquilina, Acky,
“ Acky, Acky, Nacky, Nacky, queen Nacky——
“ Come, let’s to bed——you Fubbs, you Pug you

“ ——you little puss——Purre, Tuzzy——I am a
“ senator.

“ *Aqui.* You are are a fool, I am sure.

“ *Ant.* May be so too, sweet-heart: never the
“ worse senator for all that. Come, Nacky, Nacky,
“ let's have a game at romps, Nacky.

“ *Aqui.* You would do well, Signor, to be trouble-
“ some here no longer, but leave me to myself; be
“ sober, and go home, Sir.

“ *Ant.* Home, Madona!

“ *Aqui.* Ay, home, Sir. Who am I? 32

“ *Ant.* Madona, as I take it, you are my—you are
“ —thou art my little, Nacky, Nacky——that's all.

“ *Aqui.* I find, you are resolv'd to be troublesome;
“ and so, to make short of the matter in few words, I
“ hate you, detest you, loath you, I am weary of you,
“ sick of you—hang you, you are an old, silly, imper-
“ tinent, impotent, solicitous coxcomb; crazy in your
“ head, and lazy in your body; love to be meddling
“ with every thing, and, if you had not money, you
“ are good for nothing.

“ *Ant.* Good for nothing! Hurry, durry, I'll try
“ that presently. Sixty-one years old, and good for
“ nothing: that's brave: [*To the Maid*] Come, come,
“ come Mrs. Fiddle-faddle, turn you out for a season:
“ Go, turn out, I say, it is our will and pleasure to be
“ private some moments——out, out, when you are
“ bid to——[*Puts her out and locks the door*] Good for
“ nothing, you say?

“ *Aqui.* Why, what are you good for?

“ *Ant.* In the first place, Madam, I am old, and
 “ consequently very wise, very wise, Madona, d’ye
 “ mark that? In the second place, take notice, if you
 “ please, that I am a senator; and, when I think fit,
 “ can make speeches, Madona. Hurry durry, I can
 “ make a speech in the senate-house, now and then—
 “ would make your hair stand an end, Madona.

“ *Aqui.* What care I for your speeches in the se-
 “ nate-house? if you would be silent here, I should
 “ thank you.

“ *Ant.* Why I can make speeches to thee too, my
 “ lovely Madona; for example:—

“ My cruel Fair one, since it is my fate,

“ That you should with your servant angry
 prove,

“ Though late at night, I hope ’tis not too late

“ With this to gain reception for my Love.

[*Takes out a purse of Gold, and at every pause shakes it*]

“ —There’s for thee, my little Nicky Nacky—take it,
 “ here take it—I say take it, or I’ll throw it at your
 “ head—how now rebel? 70

“ *Aqui.* Truly, my illustrious senator, I must con-
 “ fess, your honour is at present, most profoundly
 “ eloquent indeed.

“ *Ant.* Very well: Come, now let’s sit down, and
 “ think upon’t a little—come, sit, I say—sit down
 “ by me a little, my Nicky Nacky. A—[*sits down.*]
 “ Hurry durry—good for nothing——

“ *Aqui*. No, Sir, if you please, I can know my distance, and stand.

“ *Ant*. Stand! How, Nacky up, and I down?

“ Nay, then, let me exclaim with the poet,

“ Shew me a case more pitiful who can,

“ A standing woman and a falling man. 83

“ Hurry, durry—not sit down—see this, ye gods!

“ You won’t sit down?

“ *Aqui*. No, sir.

“ *Ant*. Then look you now; suppose me a bull, a

“ Basan-bull, the bull of bulls, or any bull. Thus

“ up I get, and with my brows, thus bent—I broo,

“ I say, I broo, I broo, I broo. You won’t sit down,

“ will you—I broo———

“ [*Bellows like a bull, and drives her about.*

“ *Aqui*. Well, Sir, I must endure this. [*She sits*

“ *down.*] Now your honour has been a bull, pray

“ what beast will your worship please to be next?

“ *Ant*. Now, I’ll be a senator again, and thy lover,

“ little Nicky Nacky. [*He sits by her.*] Ah! toad,

“ toad, toad, toad! Spit in my face a little, Nacky, spit

“ in my face, pr’ythee, spit in my face never so little:

“ Spit but a little bit—spit, spit, spit—spit—when you

“ are bid, I say—do, pr’ythee spit,——now, now,

“ now, spit; what you won’t spit, will you? then I’ll

“ be a dog. 102

“ *Aqui*. A dog, my Lord!

“ *Ant*. Ay a dog—and I’ll give thee, this t’other

“ purse, to let me be a dog—and use me like a dog a

“ little. Hurry durry—I will—here ’tis——

[*Gives the purse.*]

“ *Aqui.* Well, with all my heart. But let me be-
 “ seech your dogship to play your tricks over as fast
 “ as you can, that you may come to stinking the soon-
 “ er, and be turn’d out of doors, as you deserve.

“ *Ant.* Ay, ay—no matter for that—that shan’t
 “ move me—[*He gets under the table.*] Now, bough,
 “ waugh, waugh, waugh, bough, waugh.—[*Barks*
 “ *like a dog.*]

“ *Aqui.* Hold, hold, hold, Sir, I beseech you :
 “ What is’t you do ? If curs bite, they must be kick’d,
 “ Sir : Do you see, kick’d thus.

“ *Ant.* Ay, with all my heart : Do, kick, kick on ;
 “ now I am under the table, kick again——kick
 “ harder——harder yet, bough, waugh, waugh,
 “ waugh, bough—odd, I’ll have a snap at thy shins
 “ —bough, waugh, waugh, waugh, bough——odd,
 “ she kicks bravely———

122

“ *Aqui.* Nay, then I’ll go another way to work with
 “ you : And I think here’s an instrument fit for the
 “ purpose ? [*Fetches a whip and a bell.*] What, bite
 “ your mistress, sirrah ? out of door, you dog, to ken-
 “ nel, and be hang’d—bite your mistress by the legs,
 “ you rogue——— [She whips him.]

“ *Ant.* Nay, pr’ythee Nacky, now thou art too
 “ loving : Hurry durry, odd, I’ll be a dog no longer.

“ *Aqui.* Nay none of your fawning and grinning :
 “ But be gone, or here’s the discipline. What, bite

“ your mistress by the leg, you mungrel ? Out of
“ door’s——hout, hout, to kennel, sirrah, go.

“ *Ant.* This is very barbarous usage, Nacky, very
“ barbarous : look you, I will not go——I will
“ not stir from the door, that I resolve——hurry
“ durry, what, shut me out? [*She whips him out.*

“ *Aqui.* Ay, and if you come here any more to-
“ night, I’ll have my footmen lug you, you cur ?
What bite your poor mistress, Nacky, sirrah? 141

Enter Maid.

“ Heav’ns ! Madam, what’s the matter ?

[*He howls at the door like a dog.*

“ *Aqui.* Call my footmen hither presently.

Enter two Footmen.

“ *Maid.* They’re here already, Madam ; the house
“ is all alarm’d with a strange noise, that no body
“ knows what to make of.

“ *Aqui.* Go, all of you, and turn that troublesome
“ beast in the next room out of my house——If I
“ ever see him within these walls again, without my
“ leave for his admittance, you sneaking rogues——
“ I’ll have you poison’d, all poison’d like rats ; every
“ corner of the house shall stink of one of you ; go,
“ and learn hereafter to know my pleasure. So ; now
“ for my Pierre.

“ Thus, when the god-like lover is displeas’d,

“ We sacrifice our fool, and he’s appeas’d.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A Chamber. Enter BELVIDERA.

Bel. I'm sacrific'd ! I'm sold ! betray'd to shame !
Inevitable ruin has enclos'd me !

“ No sooner was I to my bed repair'd
“ To weigh and (weeping) ponder my condition ;
“ But the old hoary wretch, to whose false care 161
“ My peace and honour was entrusted, came,
“ (Like Tarquin) ghastly, with infernal lust.
“ Oh, thou Roman Lucrece, !
“ Thou could'st find friends, to vindicate thy wrong !
“ I never had but one, and he's prov'd false :
He that should guard my virtue, has betray'd it ;
Left me ! Undone me ! Oh, that I could hate him !
Where shall I go ? Oh, whither, whither, wander ?

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaf. Can Belvidera want a resting-place,
When these poor arms are ready to receive her ?
“ Oh ! 'tis in vain to struggle with desires,
“ Strong is my love to thee ; for, every moment
“ I'm from thy sight, the heart within my bosom,
“ Mourns like a tender infant in its cradle,
“ Whose nurse had left it. Come, and with the songs
“ Of gentle love, persuade it to its peace.

“ *Bel.* I fear the stubborn wanderer will not own
me ;
“ 'Tis grown a rebel, to be rul'd no longer ;

“ Scorns the indulgent bosom that first lull’d it, 180

“ And, like a disobedient child, disdains

“ The soft authority of Belvidera.

Jaf. There was a time——

Bel. Yes, yes, there was a time,
When Belvidera’s tears, her cries, and sorrows,
Were not despis’d ; when, if she chanc’d to sigh,
Or look’d but sad——there was indeed a time,
When Jaffier wou’d have ta’en her in his arms,
Eas’d her declining head upon his breast,
And never left her, till he found the cause.
But let her now weep seas ;
Cry, till she rend the earth ; sigh, till she burst
Her heart asunder ; still he bears it all
Deaf as the winds, and as the rocks unshaken.

“ *Jaf.* Have I been deaf ? Am I that rock unmov’d ?
“ Against whose root, tears beat, and sighs are sent
“ In vain ? have I beheld thy sorrows calmly ?
“ Witness against me, Heavens, have I done this ?
“ Then bear me in a whirlwind back again,
“ And let that angry dear one ne’er forgive me. 200
“ Oh ! thou too rashly censurest of my love ;
“ Could’st thou but think, how I have spent this night
“ Dark, and alone, no pillow to my head,
“ Rest in my eyes, nor quiet in my heart,
“ Thou would’st not, Belvidera, sure thou would’st,
not
“ Talk to me thus ; but like a pitying angel,
“ Spreading thy wings, come settle on my breast

“ And hatch warm comforts there, e’re sorrows freeze
it.

“ *Bel.* Why then, poor mourner, in what baleful
corner

“ Hast thou been talking, with that witch, the night?

“ On what cold stone hast thou been stretch’d along,

“ Gathering the grumbling winds about thy head,

“ To mix with theirs, the accents of thy woes?

“ Oh! now I find the cause my love forsakes me;

“ I am no longer fit to bear a share

“ In his concernments—My weak female virtue

“ Must not be trusted: ’tis too frail and tender.”

Jaf. Oh, Portia, Portia! What a soul was thine?

Bel. That Portia was a woman; and when Brutus,
Big with the fate of Rome, (Heav’n guard thy safety!)
Conceal’d from her the labours of his mind;
She let him see her blood was great as his,
Flow’d from a spring as noble, and a heart
Fit to partake his troubles as his love.

Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower,
Thou gav’st last night in parting with me; strike it
Here to my heart; and as the blood flows from it,
Judge if it run not pure, as Cato’s daughter’s.

“ *Jaf.* Thou art too good, and I indeed unworthy,
“ Unworthy so much virtue. Teach me how 230

“ I may deserve such matchless love as thine,

“ And see with what attention I’ll obey thee.

“ *Bel.* Do not despise me: that’s the all I ask.

“ *Jaf.* Despise thee! Hear me——

“ *Bel.* Oh! Thy charming tongue,

“ Is but too well acquainted with my weakness ;
“ Knows, let it name but love, my melting heart
“ Dissolves within my breast ; till with clos’d eyes
“ I reel into thy arms, and all’s forgotten.

“ *Jaf.* What shall I do ?

“ *Bel.* Tell me ; be just, and tell me,
“ Why dwells that busy cloud upon thy face ?
“ Why am I made a stranger ? Why that sigh,
“ And I not know the cause ? Why, when the world
“ Is wrapp’d in rest, why chuses then my love
“ To wander up and down in horrid darkness,
“ Loathing his bed, and these desiring arms ?
“ Why are these eyes blood-shot with tedious watch-
ing ?

“ Why starts he now, and looks as if he wish’d
“ His fate were finish’d ? Tell me, ease my fear ; 250
“ Lest, when we next time meet, I want the power
“ To search into the sickness of thy mind,
“ But talk as wildly then as thou look’st now.

Jaf. Oh, Belvidera !

Bel. Why was I last night deliver’d to a villain ?

Jaf. Ha ! a villain ?

Bel. Yes, to a villain ! Why at such an hour
Meets that assembly, all made up of wretches,
“ That looks as hell had drawn them into league ?”
Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,
Was I deliver’d with such dreadful ceremonies ?
To you, Sirs, and to your honours I bequeath her,
And with her this : Whene’er I prove unworthy—
You know the rest—then strike it to her heart.

Oh! why's that rest conceal'd from me? Must I
Be made the hostage of a hellish trust?
For such I know I am; that's all my value.
But, by the love and loyalty I owe thee,
I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves;
Straight to the senate, tell 'em all I know, 270
All that I think, all that my fears inform me.

Jaf. Is this the Roman virtue; this the blood
That boasts its purity with Cato's daughter?
Would she have e'er betray'd her Brutus?

Bel. No:
For Brutus trusted her. Wert thou so kind,
What would not Belvidera suffer for thee?

Jaf. I shall undo myself, and tell thee all.

“ *Bel.* Look not upon me as I am, a woman:
“ But as a bone, thy wife, thy friend; who long
“ Has had admisson to thy heart, and there
“ Study'd the virtues of thy gallant nature.
“ Thy constancy, thy courage, and thy truth,
“ Have been my daily lesson: I have learn'd 'em
“ And, bold as thou, can suffer or despise
“ The worst of fates for thee, and with thee share
“ 'em.”

Jaf. Oh, you divinest Powers look down and hear
“ My prayers! instruct me to reward this virtue!”
Yet think a little, ere thou tempt me further;
Think I've a tale to tell will shake thy nature, 290
Melt all this boasted constancy thou talk'st of,
Into vile tears and despicable sorrows:

Then if thou should'st betray me!—

Bel. Shall I swear?

Jaf. No, do not swear: I would not violate
Thy tender nature, with so rude a bond:
But as thou hop'st to see me live my days,
And love thee long, lock this within thy breast:
I've bound myself, by all the strictest sacraments,
Divine and human—

300

Bel. Speak!

Jaf. To kill thy father—

Bel. My father!

Jaf. Nay, the throats of the whole senate
Shall bleed, my Belvidera. He, amongst us,
That spares his father, brother, or his friend,
Is damn'd. “How rich and beauteous will the face
“Of ruin look, when these wide streets run blood!
“I, and the glorious partners of my fortune,
“Shouting, and striding o'er the prostrate dead,
“Still to new waste; whilst thou, far off in safety,
“Smiling, shalt see the wonders of our daring;
“And when night comes, with praise and love receive
me.

Bel. Oh!

Jaf. Have a care, and shrink not even in thought:
For if thou dost—

Bel. I know it; thou wilt kill me.

Do, strike thy sword into this bosom: lay me
Dead on the earth, and then thou wilt be safe.
Murder my father! tho' his cruel nature

320

Has persecuted me to my undoing ;
Driven me to basest wants ; can I behold him,
With smiles of vengeance, butcher'd in his age ?
The sacred fountain of my life destroy'd ?
And can'st thou shed the blood, that gave me being ?
Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country ?
Can thy great heart descend so vilely low,
Mix with hir'd slaves, bravoës, and common stabbers,
“ Nose-slitters, alley-lurking villains ! ” join
With such a crew, and take a ruffian's wages,
To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep ?

Jaf. Thou wrong'st me, Belvidera ! I've engag'd
With men of souls ; fit to reform the ills
Of all mankind : there's not a heart amongst them
But's stout as death, yet honest as the nature
Of man first made, e'er fraud and vice were fashion.

Bel. What's he, to whose curst hands last night
thou gav'st me ?

Was that well done ? Oh ! I could tell a story,
Would rouse thy lion heart out of its den,
And make it rage with terrifying fury.

340

Jaf. Speak on, I charge thee.

Bel. O my love ! If e'er
Thy Belvidera's peace deserv'd thy care,
Remove me from this place. Last night, last night !

Jaf. Distract me not, but give me all the truth.

Bel. No sooner wert thou gone, and I alone,
Left in the pow'r of that old son of mischief ;
No sooner was I lain on my sad bed,

But that vile wretch approach'd me, "loose, unbutton'd,

"Ready for violation:" Then my heart
Throbb'd with its fears: Oh, how I wept and sigh'd,
And shrunk and trembled! wish'd in vain for him
That should protect me! Thou, alas! wert gone.

Jaf. Patience, sweet Heav'n, 'till I make vengeance
sure.

Bel. He drew the hideous dagger forth, thou gav'st
him,

And with upbraiding smiles, he said, *Behold it:*

This is the pledge of a false husband's love:

And in my arms, then press'd, and would have clasp'd
me;

But with my cries, I scar'd his coward heart,
Till he withdrew, and mutter'd vows to hell. 360
These are thy friends! with these thy life, thy honour,
Thy love, all stak'd, and all will go to ruin.

Jaf. No more: I charge thee keep this secret close.
Clear up thy sorrows; look as if thy wrongs
Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,
As no complaint were made. No more; retire,
Retire, my life, and doubt not of my honour;
I'll heal its failings, and deserve thy love

Bel. Oh! Should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more.

Jaf. Return no more! I would not live without
thee

Another night, to purchase the creation.

Bel. When shall we meet again?

Jaf. Anon, at twelve
I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms:
Come like a travell'd dove, and bring thee peace.

Bel. Indeed!

Jaf. By all our loves.

Bel. 'Tis hard to part:

But sure no falshood ever look'd so fairly. 380

Farewel; remember twelve. [*Exit.*]

Jaf. Let Heav'n forget me,
When I remember not thy truth, thy love.
“How curs'd is my condition, toss'd and jostled
“From every corner; fortune's common fool,
“The jest of rogues, an instrumental ass,
“For villains to lay loads of shame upon,
“And drive about just for their ease and scorn.”

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. Jaffier.

Jaf. Who calls?

Pier. A friend, that could have wish'd
T' have found thee otherwise employed. What, hunt
A wife, on the dull soil! Sure a staunch husband
Of all hounds is the dullest. Wilt thou never,
Never be wean'd from caudles and confections?
What feminine tales hast thou been list'ning to,
Of unair'd shirts, catarrhs and tooth ach, got
By thin-sol'd shoes? Damnation! that a fellow,
Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction
Of a whole people, should sneak thus into corners
To ease his fulsome lusts, and fool his mind. 424

Jaf. May not a man then trifle out an hour
With a kind woman, and not wrong his calling?

Pier. Not in a cause like ours.

Jaf. Then, friend, our cause
Is in a damn'd condition : for I'll tell thee,
That canker-worm, call'd Lechery, has touch'd it ;
'Tis tainted vilely. Would'st thou think it? Renault
(That mortify'd old wither'd winter rogue)
Loves simple fornication like a priest ;
I found him out for watering at my wife ;
He visited her last night, like a kind guardian :
Faith ! she has some temptation, that's the truth
on't.

Pier. He durst not wrong his trust.

Jaf. 'Twas something late, though,
To take the freedom of a lady's chamber.

Pier. Was she in bed?

Jaf. Yes, faith, in virgin sheets,
White as her bosom, Pierre, dish'd neatly up,
Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste.

420

Oh ! how the old fox stunk, I warrant thee,
When the rank fit was on him !

Pier. Patience guide me !
He's us'd no violence ?

Jaf. No, no ; out on't, violence !
Play'd with her neck ; brush'd her with his grey beard ;
Struggl'd and touz'd ; tickl'd her till she squeak'd a
little,

May be, or so—but not a jot of violence—

Pier. Damn him.

Jaf. Ay, so say I: but hush, no more on't.
All hitherto is well, and I believe
Myself no monster yet: "tho' no man knows
"What fate he's born to." Sure it is near the hour
We all should meet for our concluding orders:
Will the ambassador be here in person?

Pier. No, he has sent commission to that villain
Renault,
To give the executing charge:
I'd have thee be a man, if possible,
And keep thy temper; for a brave revenge
Ne'er comes too late. 449

Jaf. Fear not, I am cool as patience.
"Had he completed my dishonour, rather
"Than hazard the success our hopes are ripe for,
"I'd bear it all with mortifying virtue."

Pier. He's yonder, coming this way thro' the hall;
His thoughts seem full.

Jaf. Pr'ythee retire, and leave me
With him alone: I'll put him to some trial;
See how his rotten part will bear the touching.

Pier. Be careful, then. [Exit.

Jaf. Nay, never doubt, but trust me.
What! be a devil, take a damning oath
For shedding native blood! Can there be a sin
In merciful repentance? Oh, this villain!

Enter RENAULT.

Ren. Perverse and peevish: What a slave is man
To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him!

Dispatch the tool her husband—that were well.

Who's there?

Jaf. A man.

Ren. My friend, my near ally, 460
The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge, is
very well.

Jaf. Sir, are you sure of that?
Stands she in perfect health? Beats her pulse even;
Neither too hot nor cold?

Ren. What means that question?

Jaf. Oh! women have fantastic constitutions,
Inconstant in their wishes, always wavering,
And never fix'd. Was it not boldly done,
Even at first sight, to trust the thing I lov'd
(A tempting treasure too) with youth so fierce
And vigorous as thine? but thou art honest.

Ren. Who dares accuse me?

Jaf. Curs'd be he that doubts
Thy virtue! I have try'd it, and declare,
Were I to choose a guardian of my honour,
I'd put it in thy keeping: for I know thee.

Ren. Know me!

Jaf. Ay, know thee. There's no falshood in thee;
Thou look'st just as thou art. Let us embrace.
Now would'st thou cut my throat, or I cut thine. 480

Ren. You dare not do't.

Jaf. You lie, Sir.

Ren. How!

Jaf. No more,
'Tis a base world, and must reform, that's all.

Enter SPINOSA, THEODORE, ELIOT, REVILLIDO.
DURAND, BROMVEIL, *and the rest of the Conspirators.*

Ren. Spinosa, Theodore!

Spin. The same.

Ren. You are welcome.

Spin. You are trembling, Sir.

Ren. 'Tis a cold night, indeed, and I am aged ;
Full of decay and natural infirmities : [*Pier. re-enters.*
We shall be warm, my friends, I hope to-morrow.

Pier. 'Twas not well done ; thou should'st have
stroak'd him,
And not have gall'd him.

Jaf. Damn him, let him chew on't.
Heav'n ! Where am I ? beset with cursed fiends,
That wait to damn me ! What a devil's man,
When he forgets his nature——hush, my heart.

Ren. My friends, 'tis late ; are we assembled all ?
“ Where's Theodore ? 500

Theod. “ At hand.

Ren. “ Spinosa.

Spin. “ Here.

Ren. “ Bromveil.

Brom. “ I'm ready.

Ken. “ Durand and Brabe.

Dur. “ Command us.

We are both prepar'd”

Omnes. All ; all.

Ren. “ Mezzano, Revillido,
“ Ternon, Retrosi ! Oh ! you're men, I find,

Fit to behold your fate, and meet her summons.
To-morrow's rising sun must see you all
Deck'd in your honours. Are the soldiers ready?

Pier. All, all.

Ren. You, Durand, with your thousand must possess
St. Mark's ; you, Captain, know your charge already
'Tis to secure the ducal palace: " You,
" Brabe, with an hundred more, must gain the Secque:
" With the like number, Bromveil, to the Procurale;"
Be all this done with the least tumult possible, 521
'Till in each place you post sufficient guards:
Then sheathe your swords in every breast you meet.

Jaf. Oh! reverend cruelty! damn'd bloody villain!

Ren. During this execution, Durand, you
Must in the midst keep your battalia fast;
And, Theodore, be sure to plant the cannon
That may command the streets; " whilst Revillido,
" Messano, Ternon, and Retrosi guard you."
This done, we'll give the general alarm,
Apply petards, and force the ars'nal gates;
Then fire the city round in several places,
Or with our cannon (if it dare resist)
Batter to ruin. But above all I charge you,
Shed blood enough; spare neither sex nor age,
Name nor condition; if there live a senator
After to-morrow, though the dullest rogue
That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends.
If possible, let's kill the very name
Of senator, and bury it in blood. 540

Jaf. Merciless, horrid slave—Ay, blood enough!

Shed blood enough, old Renault! how thou charm'st
me!

Ren. But one thing more, and then farewell, till
fate

Join us again, or sep'rate us for ever:

First let's embrace. Heav'n knows who next shall thus

Wing ye together; but let's all remember,

We wear no common cause upon our swords:

Let each man think that on his single virtue

Depends the good and fame of all the rest;

Eternal honour, or perpetual infamy.

“ Let us remember through what dreadful hazards

“ Propitious fortune hitherto has led us:

“ How often on the brink of some discovery

“ Have we stood tottering, yet still kept our ground

“ So well, that the busiest searchers ne'er could fol-
low

“ Those subtle tracks, which puzzled all suspicion?”

You droop, Sir.

Jaf. No; With most profound attention
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.

Ren. “ Tho' there be yet few hours 'twixt them
and ruin,

“ Are not the senate lull'd in full security, 561

“ Quiet and satisfy'd, as fools are always?

“ Never did so profound repose fore-run

“ Calamity so great. Nay, our good fortune

“ Has blinded the most piercing of mankind,

“ Strengthen'd the fearfullest, charm'd the most sus-
pectful,

“ Confounded the most subtle : for we live,
“ We live, my friends, and quickly shall our life
“ Prove fatal to these tyrants.” Let’s consider,
That we destroy oppression, avarice,
A people nurs’d up equally with vices
And loathsome lusts, which nature most abhors,
And such as without shame she cannot suffer.

Jaf. Oh, Belvidera ! take me to thy arms,
And shew me where’s my peace, for I have lost it.

[*Exit.*

Ren. Without the least remorse then, let’s resolve
With fire and sword t’exterminate these tyrants ;
“ And when we shall behold those curs’d tribunals
“ Stain’d by the tears and sufferings of the innocent,
“ Burning with flames rather from Heav’n than ours,
“ The raging, furious, and un pitying soldier 581
“ Pulling his reeking dagger from the bosoms
“ Of gasping wretches ; death in every quarter ;
“ With all that sad disorder can produce
“ To make a spectacle of horror ; then,
“ Then let us call to mind, my dearest friends,
“ That there is nothing pure upon the earth ;
“ That the most valu’d things have most allays,
“ And that in change of all these vile enormities,”
Under whose weight this wretched country labours,
The means are only in our hands to crown them.

Pier. And may those pow’rs above, that are pro-
pitious
To gallant minds, record this cause and bless it.

Ren. Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,

Should there, my friends, be found among us one
False to this glorious enterprise, what fate,
What vengeance were enough for such a villain?

Eli. Death here without repentance, Hell hereafter.

Ren. Let that be my lot, if as here I stand,
Listed by fate among her darling sons, 600
Tho' I had one only brother, dear by all
The strictest ties of nature; "tho' one hour
"Had given us birth, one fortune fed our wants,
"One only love, and that but of each other,
"Still fill'd our minds;" could I have such a friend
Join'd in this cause, and had but ground to fear
He mean't foul play; may this right hand drop from
me,

If I'd not hazard all my future peace,
And stab him to the heart before you. Who,
Who would do less? Would'st thou not, Pierre, the
same?

Pier. You've singled me, Sir, out for this hard
question.

As if 'twere started only for my sake?
Am I the thing you fear! Here, here's my bosom,
Search it with all your swords. Am I a traitor?

Ren. No: but I fear your late commended friend
Is little less. Come, Sirs, 'tis now no time
To trifle with our safety. Where's this Jaffier?

Spin. He left the room just now, in strange disorder.

Ren. Nay, there is danger in him: I observ'd him;
During the time I took for explanation, 620
He was transported from most deep attention

To a confusion which he could not smother,
“ His looks grew full of sadness and surprise,
“ All which betray’d a wavering spirit in him,
“ That labour’d with reluctancy and sorrow.”

What’s requisite for safety, must be done
With speedy execution ; he remains
Yet in our power : I, for my own part, wear
A dagger——

Pier. Well.

Ren. And I could wish it——

Pier. Where?

Ren. Buried in his heart.

Pier. Away ; we’re yet all friends,
No more of this, ’twill breed ill blood among us.

Spin. Let us all draw our swords, and search the
house,

Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding
O’er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of him.

Pier. Who talks of killing ? Who’s he’ll shed the
blood

That’s dear to me ? is’t you, or you, or you, Sir ! 640
What, not one speak ! how you stand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there !

Yet not a word ! Then, Sir, I’ll tell you a secret ;
Suspicion’s but at best a coward’s virtue. [*To Ren.*

Ren. A coward !—— [*Handles his sword*

Pier. Put up thy sword, old man ;
Thy hand shakes at it. Come let’s heal this breach ;
I am too hot, we yet may all live friends.

Spin. Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

Pier. Again! Who's that? 650

Spi. 'Twas I.

The. And I.

Ren. And I.

Om. And all.

Ren. "Who are on my side?"

Spi. "Every honest sword.

Let's die like men, and not be sold like slaves.

Pier. One such word more, by Heav'n I'll to the
senate,

And hang ye all, like dogs, in clusters.

Why weep your coward swords half out their shells?

Why do you not all brandish them like mine?

You fear to die, and yet dare talk of killing.

Ren. Go to the senate, and betray us! haste!

Secure thy wretched life; we fear to die

Less than thou dar'st be honest.

Pier. That's rank falshood.

Fear'st not thou death! Fie, there's a knavish itch

In that salt blood, an utter foe to smarting.

Had Jaffier's wife prov'd kind, he'd still been true.

Faugh how that stinks! thou die, thou kill my friend!

Or thou! or thou! with that lean wither'd face,

Away, disperse all to your several charges,

And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you.

I'll bring that man, whose blood you so much thirst
for,

And you shall see him venture for you fairly—

Hence! hence, I say.

[Exit Renault angrily.]

Spi. I fear we've been to blame,
And done too much.

The. " 'Twas too far urg'd against the man you
lov'd.

Rev. " Here take our swords, and crush them with
your feet."

Spi. Forgive us, gallant friend.

Pier. Nay, now you've found
The way to melt, and cast me as you will.

" I'll fetch this friend, and give him to your mercy :

" Nay, he shall die, if you will take him from me.

" For your repose, I'll quit my heart's best jewel ;

" But would not have him torn away by villains,

" And spiteful villany.

Spi. " No, may you both

" For ever live, and fill the world with fame. 220

Pier. " Now y' are too kind." Whence rose all this
discord ?

Oh, what a dangerous precipice have we 'scap'd !

How near a fall was all we'd long been building !

What an eternal blot had stain'd our glories,

If one, the bravest and the best of men,

Had fall'n a sacrifice to rash suspicion,

Butcher'd by those, whose cause he came to cherish !

" Oh ! could you know him all, as I have known him ;

" How good he is, how just, how true, how brave,

" You would not leave this place till you had seen
him ;

" Humbled yourselves before him, kiss'd his feet,

" And gain'd remission for the worst of follies."

Come but to-morrow, all your doubts shall end,
And to your loves, me better recommend,
That I've preserv'd your fame, and sav'd my friend.
[*Exeunt.*]

Act IV. SCENE I.

The Rialto. Enter JAFFIER and BELVIDERA.

Jaffier.

WHERE dost thou lead me? Every step I move,
Methinks I tread upon some mangled limb
Of a rack'd friend. Oh, my charming ruin!
Where are we wandering?

Bel. To eternal honour.

To do a deed shall chronicle thy name
Among the glorious legends of those few
That have sav'd sinking nations. Thy renown
Shall be the future song of all the virgins,
Who by thy piety have been preserv'd
From horrid violation. Every street
Shall be adorn'd with statues to thy honour;
And at thy feet this great inscription written,
Remember him that propp'd the fall of Venice.

Jaf. Rather, remember him, who, after all
The sacred bonds of oaths, and holier friendship,
In fond compassion to a woman's tears,
Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth, and honour,
To sacrifice the bosom that reliev'd him.
Why wilt thou damn me?

Bel. Oh, inconstant man!

How will you promise ; how will you deceive !
Do, return back, replace me in my bondage,
Tell all thy friends how dangerously thou lov'st me,
And let thy dagger do its bloody office.

“ Oh ! that kind dagger, Jaffier, how 'twill look

“ Struck thro' my heart, drench'd in my blood to
th' hilt ;

“ Whilst these poor dying eyes shall with their tears

“ No more torment thee , then thou wilt be free : ”

Or if thou think'st it nobler, let me live,

Till I'm a victim to the hateful lust

Of that infernal devil, “ that old fiend,

“ That's damn'd himself, and would undo mankind.”

Last night, my love !

Jaf. Name it not again :

It shews a beastly image to my fancy,

Will wake me into madness. “ Oh, the villain !

“ That durst approach such purity as thine

“ On terms so vile : ” Destruction, swift destruction,

Fall on my coward head, “ and make my name 40

“ The common scorn of fools,” if I forgive him :

“ If I forgive him ! If I not revenge

“ With utmost rage, and most unstaying fury,

“ Thy sufferings, thou dear darling of my life.

Bel. Delay no longer then, but to the senate,

And tell the dismal'st story ever utter'd :

Tell 'em what bloodshed, rapines, desolations,

Have been prepar'd : how near's the fatal hour.

Save thy poor country, save the reverend blood

Of all its nobles, which to-morrow's dawn
Must else see shed. "Save the poor tender lives
"Of all those little infants, which the swords
"Of murderers are whetting for, this moment.
"Think thou already hear'st their dying screams;
"Think that thou see'st their sad distracted mothers,
"Kneeling before thy feet, and begging pity:
"With torn dishevel'd hair, and streaming eyes,
"Their naked mangled breasts, besmear'd with blood;
"And even the milk, with which their fondled babes
"Softly they hush'd, dropping in anguish from 'em:
"Think thou seest this, and then consult thy heart.

Jaf. Oh!

Bel. Think too, if you lose this present minute,
"What miseries the next day brings upon thee:
"Imagine all the horrors of that night;
"Murder and rapine, waste and desolation,
"Confus'dly raging:" Think what then may prove
My lot; the ravisher may then come safe,
And, 'midst the terror of the public ruin,
Do a damn'd deed; "perhaps may lay a train
"To catch thy life: Then where will be revenge,
"The dear revenge that's due to such a wrong?"

Jaf. By all Heaven's powers, prophetic truth dwells
in thee;

For every word thou speak'st, strikes thro' my heart,
"Like a new light, and shews it, how 't has wan-
der'd,"

Just what thou 'st made me, take me, Belvidera,
And lead me to the place where I'm to say

This bitter lesson; where I must betray
My truth, my virtue, constancy, and friends.
Must I betray my friend? Ah! take me quickly;
Secure me well before that thought's renew'd; 81
If I relapse once more, all's lost for ever.

Bel. Hast thou a friend more dear than Belvidera?

Jaf. No; thou'rt my soul itself; wealth, friend-
ship, honour,

All present joys, and earnest of all future,
Are summ'd in thee. "Methinks, when in thy arms,
"Thus leaning on thy breast, one minute's more
"Than a long thousand years of vulgar hours.
"Why was such happiness not given me pure?
"Why dash'd with cruel wrongs, and bitter warn-
ings?"

Come, lead me forward, now, like a tame lamb
To sacrifice. Thus, in his fatal garlands
Deck'd fine and pleas'd, the wanton skips and plays,
Trots by th' enticing flatt'ring priestess' side,
And much transported with its little pride,
Forgets his dear companions of the plain;
Till, by her bound, he's on the altar lain,
Yet then too hardly bleats, such pleasure's in the pain.

Enter Officer and six Guards.

Off. Stand! who goes there?

Bel. Friends.

100

"*Jaf.* Friends, Belvidera! Hide me from my
friends:

“ By Heav’n, I’d rather see the face of hell,

“ Than meet the man I love.”

Off. But what friends are you?

Bel. Friends to the senate, and the state of Venice.

Off. My orders are to seize on all I find
At this late hour, and bring ’em to the council,
Who are now sitting.

Jaf. Sir, you shall be obey’d,

“ Hold, brute, stand off! none of your paws upon
me.”

Now the lot ’s cast, and, fate, do what thou wilt.

[*Exeunt guarded.*]

SCENE II.

*The Senate-House, where appear sitting the Duke of VENE-
NICE, PRIULI, ANTONIO, and eight other Senators.*

Duke. Antony, Priuli, senators of Venice,
Speak, why are we assembled here this night?
What have you to inform us of, concerns
The state of Venice’ honour, or its safety?

Pri. Could words express the story I’ve to tell you,
Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears
That fall from my old eyes; but there is cause
We all should weep, tear off these purple robes, 120
And wrap ourselves in sackcloth, sitting down
On the sad earth, and cry aloud to Heav’n:
Heav’n knows, if yet there be an hour to come
Ere Venice be no more.

All Sen. How!

Pri. Nay, we stand
 Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.
 Within this city's form'd a dark conspiracy
 To massacre us all, our wives and children,
 Kindred and friends, our palaces and temples
 To lay in ashes : nay, the hour too fix'd ;
 The swords, for ought I know, drawn e'en this mo-
 ment,

And the wild waste begun. From unknown hands
 I had this warning ; but, if we are men,
 Let's not be tamely butcher'd, but do something
 That may inform the world, in after ages,
 Our virtue was not ruin'd, tho' we were.

[*A noise without.*

Room, room, make room for some prisoners—

“ *Sen.* Let's raise the city.”

Enter Officer and Guards.

Duke. Speak, there. What disturbance ?

Off. Two prisoners have the guards seiz'd in the
 street, 140

Who say, they come t' inform this reverend senate
 About the present danger.

Enter JAFFIER and Officer.

All. Give 'em entrance—Well, who are you ?

Jaf. A villain.

“ *Ant.* Short and pithy :”

The man speaks well,

Jaf. Would every man, that hears me,
Would deal so honestly, and own his title.

Duke. 'Tis rumour'd, that a plot has been contriv'd
Against this state ; and you've a share in't too.
If you are a villain, to redeem your honour
Unfold the truth, and be restor'd with mercy.

Jaf. Think not, that I to save my life came hither ;
I know its value better ; but in pity
To all those wretches, whose unhappy dooms
Are fix'd and seal'd. You see me here before you,
The sworn and covenanted foe of Venice :
But use me as my dealings may deserve,
And I may prove a friend.

Duke. The slave capitulates, 160
Give him the tortures.

Jaf. That you dare not do :
Your fear won't let you, not the longing itch
To hear a story which you dread the truth of :
Truth, which the fear of smart shall ne'er get from
me.

Cowards are scar'd with threat'nings ; boys are whipt
Into confessions : but a steady mind
Acts of itself, ne'er asks the body counsel.
Give him the tortures ! Name but such a thing
Again, by heav'n I'll shut these lips for ever.
Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels,
Shall force a groan away, that you may guess at.

“ *Ant.* A bloody-minded fellow, I'll warrant ;
“ A damn'd bloody-minded fellow.”

Duke. Name your conditions.

Jaf. For myself full pardon,
Besides the lives of two and twenty friends,
Whose names are here enroll'd—Nay, let their crimes
Be ne'er so monstrous, I must have the oaths
And sacred promise of this reverend council, 180
That, in a full assembly of the senate
The thing I ask be ratify'd. Swear this,
And I'll unfold the secret of your danger.

“*All.* We'll swear.”

Duke. Propose the oath.

Jaf. By all the hopes
Ye have of peace and happiness hereafter,
Swear.

“*All.* We all swear.

“*Jaf.* To grant me what I've ask'd,”
Ye swear?

All. We swear.

Jaf. And, as ye keep the oath,
May you, and your posterity be bless'd,
Or curs'd for ever.

All. Else be curs'd for ever.

Jaf. Then here's the list, and with't the full dis-
close

Of all that threatens you. [*Delivers a paper.*
Now, fate, thou hast caught me. 199

“*Ant.* Why, what a dreadful catalogue of cut-
throats is here! I'll warrant you, not one of these
fellows but has a face like a lion. I dare not so
much as read their names over.”

Duke. Give order that all diligent search be made
To seize these men, their characters are public ;
The paper intimates their rendezvous
To be at the house of a fam'd Grecian courtezan,
Call'd Aquilina ; see that place secur'd.

“ *Ant.* What, my Nicky Nacky ! Hurry, durry !
“ Nicky Nacky, in the plot—I'll make a speech :
“ Most noble senators,
“ What headlong apprehensions drive you on,
“ Right, noble, wise, and truly solid senators,
“ To violate the laws and rights of nations ?
“ The lady is a lady of renown ;
“ 'Tis true, she holds a house of fair reception,
“ And, tho' I say't myself, as many more
“ Can say, as well as I—

“ *2 Sen.* My lord, long speeches
“ Are frivolous here, when dangers are so near us.
“ We all well know your interest in that lady ; 221
“ The world talks loud on't.

“ *Ant.* Verily I have done ;
“ I say no more.

“ *Duke.* But, since he has declar'd
“ Himself concern'd, pray, Captain, take great caution
“ To treat the fair-one as becomes her character ;
“ And let her bed-chamber be search'd with decency.”

You, Jaffier, must with patience bear till morning
To be our prisoner.

Jaf. Would the chains of death
Had bound me safe, e'er I had known this minute.

“ I’ve done a deed will make my story hereafter

“ Quoted in competition with all ill ones :

“ The history of my wickedness shall run

“ Down thro’ the low traditions of the vulgar,

“ And boys be taught to tell the tale of Jaffier.”

Duke. Captain, withdraw your prisoner.

Jaf. Sir, if possible, 239
Lead me where my own thoughts themselves may lose
me ;

Where I may doze out what I’ve left of life,

Forget myself, and this day’s guilt and falsehood.

Cruel remembrance, how shall I appease thee ?

[*Exit guarded.*]

Off. [*Without.*] More traitors ; room, room, room,
make room there.

Duke. How’s this ? guards !

Where are our guards ? Shut up the gates, the trea-
son’s

Already at our doors.

Enter Officer.

Off. My lords, more traitors,
Seiz’d in the very act of consultation ;
Furnish’d with arms and instruments of mischief.
Bring in the prisoners.

*Enter PIERRE, RENAULT, THEODORE, ELIOT, RE-
VELLIDO, and other Conspirators, in fetters.*

Pier. You, my lords, and fathers,
(As you are pleas’d to call yourselves) of Venice ;
If you sit here to guide the course of justice,

Why these disgraceful chains, upon the limbs
That have so often labour'd in your service ?
Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow
On those, that bring you conquest home, and
honours ?

Duke. Go on ; you shall be heard, Sir.

“ *Ant.* And be hang'd too, I hope.” 260

Pier. Are these the trophies I've deserv'd for fighting
Your battles with confederated powers ?
When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you ;
And brought the fleets of Spain to your own harbours ;
When you, great Duke, shrunk trembling in your
palace,

And saw your wife, the Adriatic, plough'd,
Like a lewd whore, by bolder prows than yours,
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your loose Venetians
The task of honour, and the way to greatness ?
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears
To stipulate the terms of su'd-for peace ?
And this my recompence ! if I'm a traitor,
Produce my charge ; or shew the wretch that's base
And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traitor.

Duke. Know you one Jaffier ? [Consp. murmur.

Pier. Yes, and know his virtue.
His justice, truth, his general worth, and sufferings
From a hard father taught me first to love him.

Enter JAFFIER guarded.

Duke. See him brought forth.

Pier. My friend too bound ! nay then 280

Our fate has conquer'd us, and we must fall.
Why droops the man whose welfare's so much mine,
They're but one thing? These reverend tyrants, Jaffier,
Call us traitors. Art thou one, my brother?

Jaf. To thee, I am the falsest, veriest slave,
That e'er betray'd a generous, trusting friend,
And gave up honour to be sure of ruin.

All our fair hopes, which morning was t' have
crown'd,

Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.

Pier. So, then all's over:
Venice has lost her freedom, I my life.
No more! Farewel!

Duke. Say; will you make confession
Of your vile deeds, and trust the senate's mercy?

Pier. Curs'd be your senate: curs'd your constitu-
tion:

The curse of growing factions and divisions,
Still vex your councils, shake your public safety,
And make the robes of government you wear,
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me.

Duke. Pardon, or death?

Pier. Death! honourable death! 300

Ren. Death's the best thing we ask, or you can
give,

No shameful bonds, but honourable death.

Duke. Break up the council. Captain, guard your
prisoners.

Jaffier, you're free, but these must wait for judgment.

[*Ex. all the Senators.*]

Pier. Come, where's my dungeon? Lead me to my straw:

It will not be the first time I've lodg'd hard
To do the senate service.

Jaf. Hold, one moment.

Pier. Who's he disputes the judgment of the senate?
Presumptuous rebel—on— [Strikes Jaffier.

Jaf. By Heav'n, you stir not!
I must be heard; I must have leave to speak.
Thou hast disgrac'd me, Pierre, by a vile blow:
Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice?
But use me as thou wilt, thou can'st not wrong me,
For I am fallen beneath the basest injuries:
Yet look upon me with an eye of mercy,
With pity and with charity behold me;
“Shut not thy heart against a friend's repentance;”
But, as there dwells a godlike nature in thee, 320
Listen with mildness to my supplications.

Pier. What whining monk art thou? what holy
cheat,
That would'st incroach upon my credulous ears,
And cant'st thus vilely? Hence! I know thee not;
“Dissemble and be nasty.” Leave, hypocrite.

Jaf. Not know me, Pierre!

Pierre No, I know thee not! What art thou?

Jaf. Jaffier, thy friend, thy once lov'd valu'd friend!
Tho' now deserv'dly scorn'd, and us'd most hardly.

Pier. Thou Jaffier! thou, my once lov'd valu'd
friend!

By Heav'ns thou ly'st; the man so call'd, my friend,

Was generous, honest, faithful, just, and valiant;
 Noble in mind, and in his person lovely;
 Dear to my eyes, and tender to my heart:
 But thou, a wretched, base, false, worthless coward,
 Poor, even in soul, and loathsome in thy aspect;
 All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.
 Prithee avoid; nor longer cling thus round me,
 Like something baneful, that my nature's chill'd at.

Jaf. I have not wrong'd thee, by these tears I
 have not, 340

“ But still am honest, true, and, hope too, valiant;
 “ My mind still full of thee, therefore still noble.
 “ Let not thy eyes then shun me, nor thy heart
 “ Detest me utterly. Oh! look upon me,
 “ Look back, and see my sad, sincere submission!
 “ How my heart swells, as e'en 'twould burst my bo-
 som;

“ Fond of its goal, and labouring to be at thee.
 “ What shall I do? what say, to make thee hear me?

Pier. Hast thou not wrong'd me? Dar'st thou call
 thyself

That once lov'd, valu'd friend of mine,
 And swear thou hast not wrong'd me? Whence these
 chains?

Whence the vile death which I may meet this moment?
 Whence this dishonour, but from thee, thou false one?

Jaf. All's true; yet grant one thing, and I've done
 asking.

Pier. What's that?

Jaf. To take thy life, on such conditions
The council have propos'd : thou, and thy friends,
May yet live long, and to be better treated.

Pier. Life! ask my life ! Confess! record myself
A villain, for the privilege to breathe ! 360
And carry up and down this cursed city,
A discontented and repining spirit,
Burthensome to itself, a few years longer ;
To lose it, may be, at last, in a lewd quarrel
For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou art !
No, this vile world and I have long been jangling,
And cannot part on better terms than now,
When only men, like thee, are fit to live in't.

Jaf. By all that's just——

Pier. Swear by some other powers,
For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

Jaf. Then, by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee,
Till, to thyself, at least thou'rt reconcil'd,
However thy resentment deal with me.

Pier. Not leave me !

Jaf. No ; thou shalt not force me from thee.
Use me reproachfully, and like a slave ;
Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs
On my poor head ; I'll bear it all with patience
Shall weary out thy most unfriendly cruelty : 380
Lie at thy feet, and kiss 'em, tho' they spurn me ;
Till wounded by my sufferings, thou relent,
And raise me to thy arms, with dear forgiveness.

Pier. Art thou not——

Jaf. What ?

Pier. A traitor?

Jaf. Yes.

Pier. A villain.

Jaf. Granted.

Pier. A coward, a most scandalous coward;
Spititless, void of honour; one who has sold
Thy everlasting fame, for shameless life!

Jaf. All, all, and more, much more: my faults
are numberless.

Pier. And would'st thou have me live on terms
like thine?

Base, as thou'rt false——

Jaf. No; 'tis to me that's granted:
The safety of thy life was all I aim'd at,
In recompence for faith and trust so broken.

Pier. I scorn it more, because preserv'd by thee;
And, as when first my foolish heart took pity 400
On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from the state
Of wretchedness, in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
To rank thee in my list of noble friends;
All I receiv'd, in surety for thy truth,
Were unregarded oaths, and this, this dagger,
Giv'n with a worthless pledge, thou since hast stol'n:
So I restore it back to thee again;
Swearing by all those pow'rs which thou hast violated,
Never from this curs'd hour to hold communion,
Friendship, or interest, with thee, tho' our years
Were to exceed those limited the world.
Take it—farewel—for now I owe thee nothing.

Jaf. Say thou wilt live then.

Pier. For my life, dispose it
Just as thou wilt, because 'tis what I'm tir'd with.

Jaf. Oh, Pierre!

Pier. No more.

Jaf. My eyes won't lose the sight of thee,
But languish after thee, and ache with gazing. 420

Pier. Leave me—Nay, then thus, thus I throw thee
from me;

And curses, great as is thy falshood, catch thee. [*Ex.*

Jaf. Amen.

He's gone, my father, friend, preserver,
And here's the portion he has left me :

[*Holds the dagger up.*

This dagger. Well remember'd! with this dagger,

I gave a solemn vow of dire importance;

Parted with this, and Belvidera together.

Have a care, mem'ry, drive that thought no farther:

No, I'll esteem it, as a friend's last legacy;

Treasure it up within this wretched bosom,

Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,

That when they meet, they start not from each other.

So now for thinking—A blow, call'd traitor, villain,

Coward, dishonourable coward; fough!

“Oh! for a long sound sleep, and so forget it.”

Down, busy devil!

Enter BELVIDERA.

Bel. Whither shall I fly?

Where hide me and my miseries together?

Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted ? 440
Sunk into trembling fears and desperation,
Not daring to look up to that dear face
Which us'd to smile, ev'n on my faults ; but, down,
Bending these miserable eyes on earth,
Must move in penance, and implore much mercy.

Jaf. Mercy ! kind Heav'n has surely endless stores,
Hoarded for thee, of blessings yet untasted :

“ Let wretches, loaded hard with guilt, as I am,
“ Bow with the weight, and groan beneath the bur-
then,

“ Creep with a remnant of that strength they've left
“ Before the footstool of that Heav'n they've injur'd.
Oh, Belvidera ! I'm the wretched'st creature
E'er crawl'd on earth. “ Now, if thou'st virtue, help
me

“ Take me into thy arms, and speak the words of
peace

“ To my divided soul, that wars within me,

“ And raises every sense to my confusion :

“ By Heav'n, I'm tottering on the very brink

“ Of peace, and thou art all the hold I've left.

“ *Bel.* Alas ! I know thy sorrows are most mighty :

“ I know thou'st cause to mourn, to mourn, my
Jaffier, 460

“ With endless cries, and never-ceasing wailing :

“ Thou'st lost——

“ *Jaf.* Oh ! I have lost what can't be counted ;”
My friend too, Belvidera, that dear friend,
Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoic'd in,

Has us'd me like a slave, shamefully us'd me :

Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.

“ What shall I do ? Resentment, indignation,

“ Love, pity, fear, and mem'ry how I've wrong'd him

“ Distract my quiet with the very thought on't,

“ And tear my heart to pieces in my bosom.

Bel. What has he done ?

“ *Jaf.* Thou'dst hate me, should I tell thee.

“ *Bel.* Why ?

“ *Jaf.* Oh ! he has us'd me ! yet, by Heav'n, I bear
it ;

“ He has us'd me, Belvidera, but first swear,

“ That when I've told thee, thou wilt not loath me
utterly,

“ Tho' vilest blots, and stains appear upon me ;

“ But still, at least with charitable goodness,

“ Be near me in the pangs of my affliction ; 480

“ Nor scorn me, Belvidera, as he has done.

“ *Bel.* Have I then e'er been false, that now I'm
doubted ?

“ Speak, what's the cause I'm grown into distrust ?

“ Why thought unfit to hear my love's complaining ?

“ *Jaf.* Oh !

“ *Bel.* Tell me.

“ *Jaf.* Bear my failings, for they're many.

“ Oh, my dear angel ! in that friend, I've lost

“ All my soul's peace ; for ev'ry thought of him

“ Strikes my sense hard, and deads it in my brains !

“ Would'st thou believe it ?

“ *Bel.* Speak.

Jaf. Before we parted,
E're yet his guards had led him to his prison,
Full of severest sorrows for his sufferings,
With eyes o'erflowing, and a bleeding heart,
“ Humbling myself, almost beneath my nature,
As at his feet I kneel'd and su'd for mercy,
“ Forgetting all our friendship, all the dearness,
“ In which we've liv'd so many years together, 500
With a reproachful hand he dash'd a blow:
He struck me, Belvidera! by Heav'n, he struck me!
Buffeted, call'd me traitor, villain, coward.
Am I a Coward? Am I a villain? Tell me:
Thou'rt the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so?
Damnation! Coward!

Bel. Oh! forgive him, Jaffier;
And, if his sufferings wound thy heart already,
What will they do to-morrow?

Jaf. Ah!

Bel. To-morrow,
When thou shalt see him stretch'd in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a shameful death;
His bleeding bowels, and his broken limbs,
Insulted o'er, by a vile butchering villain;
What will thy heart do then? Oh! sure 'twill stream,
Like my eyes now.

Jaf. What means thy dreadful story?
Death, and tomorrow! Broken limbs and bowels!
“ Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain! 520
“ By all my fears, I shall start out to madness

“ With barely guessing, if the truth’s hid longer.”

Bel. The faithless senators, ’tis they’ve decreed it :
They say, according to our friends’ request,
They shall have death, and not ignoble bondage :
Declare their promis’d mercy all as forfeited :
False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession,
Warrants are pass’d for public death tomorrow.

Jaf. Death! doom’d to die! condemn’d unheard!
unpleaded!

Bel. Nay, cruel’st racks and torments are preparing
To force confession from their dying pangs.
Oh! do not look so terribly upon me!
How your lips shake, and all your face disorder’d!
What means my love?

Jaf. Leave me, I charge thee, leave me——Strong
temptations
Wake in my heart.

Bel. For what?

Jaf. No more, but leave me.

Bel. Why?

Jaf. Oh! by Heav’n, I love thee with that fondness,
I would not have thee stay a moment longer
Near these curs’d hands: Are they not cold upon thee?

[Pulls the Dagger half out of his Bosom,
and puts it back again.

Bel. No, everlasting comfort’s in thy arms.
To lean thus on thy breast, is softer ease
Than downy pillows, deck’d with leaves of roses.

Jaf. Alas! thou think’st not of the thorns ’tis fill’d
with:

Fly, e'er they gall thee. There's a lurking serpent
Ready to leap, and sting thee to the heart :
Art thou not terrify'd ?

Bel. No.

Jaf. Call to mind
What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought
me.

Bel. Hah !

Jaf. Where's my friend ? my friend, thou smiling
mischief !

Nay, shrink not, now 'tis too late ; “ thou should'st
have fled

“ When thy guilt first had cause ;” for dire revenge
Is up, and raging for my friend. He groans !
Hark, how he groans ! his screams are in my ears
Already ; see, they've fix'd him on the wheel,
And now they tear him—Murder ! Perjur'd senate !
Murder—Oh !—Hark thee, traitress, thou hast done
this !

Thanks to thy tears, and false persuading love.
How her eyes speak ! Oh, thou bewitching creature !

[Fumbling for his dagger.]

Madness can't hurt thee. Come, thou little trembler,
Creep even into my heart, and there lie safe ;
'Tis thy own citadel—Hah—yet stand off.

Heav'n must have justice, “ and my broken vows
“ Will sink me else beneath its reaching mercy.”
I'll wink, and then 'tis done——

Bel. What means the lord
Of me, my life, and love ? What's in thy bosom,

B. P. L. I. T. H. E. A. T. R. E.



VENICE PRESERVED.

*Jaft. 'Tis but one blow! yet by immortal love
I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.*
Act 4. Scene last.

Thou grasp'st at so? "Nay, why am I thus treated?

[Draws the dagger and offers to stab her.]

"What wilt thou do?" Ah! do not kill me, Jaffier:

"Pity these panting breasts, and trembling limbs,

"That us'd to clasp thee when thy looks were milder,

"That yet hang heavy on my unpurg'd soul;

"And plunge it not into eternal darkness.

Jaf. Know, Belvidera, when we parted last,

I gave this dagger with thee, as in trust,

To be thy portion if I e'er prov'd false. 530

On such condition, was my truth believ'd:

But now 'tis forfeited, and must be paid for.

[Offers to stab her again.]

Bel. Oh! Mercy!

[Kneeling.]

Jaf. Nay, no struggling.

Bel. Now then, kill me,

[Leaps on his neck, and kisses him.]

While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,

Kiss thy revengeful lips, and die in joys

Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

Jaf. I am, I am, a coward, witness Heav'n,

Witness it, earth, and every being witness:

'Tis but one blow! yet by immortal love,

I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.

[He throws away the dagger, and embraces her]

The seal of Providence is sure upon thee;

And thou wert born for yet unheard-of wonders.

Oh! thou wert either born to save or damn me.

By all the power that's given me o'er my soul,

By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,
 “By the victorious love, that still waits on thee;”
 Fly to thy cruel father, save my friend,
 Or all our future quiet’s lost for ever. 600
 Fall at his feet, cling round his rev’rend knees,
 Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears,
 Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him,
 Crush him in th’ arms, torture him with thy soft-
 ness;
 Nor till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
 But conquer him, as thou hast conquer’d me.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

An Apartment in Priuli’s House. Enter PRIULI solus.

Priuli.

WHY, cruel Heav’n, have my unhappy days
 Been lengthen’d to this sad one? Oh! dishonour
 And deathless infamy is fallen upon me.
 Was it my fault? Am I a traitor? No,
 But then, my only child, my daughter wedded;
 There my best blood runs foul, and a disease
 Incurable has seiz’d upon my memory,
 To make it rot and stink to after-ages.
 “Curst be the fatal minute when I got her;
 “Or wou’d that I’d been any thing but man,

“ And rais’d an issue which would ne’er have wrong’d
me.

“ The miserable creatures (man excepted,
“ Are not the less esteem’d, tho’ their posterity
“ Degenerate from the virtues of their fathers :
“ The vilest beasts are happy in their offspring,
“ While only man gets traitors, whores, and villains.
“ Curs’d be the names, and some swift blow from
fate
“ Lay this head deep, where mine may be forgotten.”

Enter BELVIDERA, in a long mourning veil.

Bel. He’s there, my father, my inhuman father,
That for three years has left an only child 20
Expos’d to all the outrages of fate,
And cruel ruin!—oh——

Pri. What child of sorrow
Art thou, that comest wrapt in weeds of sadness,
And mov’st as if thy steps were tow’rds a grave?

Bel. A wretch who from the very top of happi-
ness
Am fall’n into the lowest depths of misery,
And want your pitying hand to raise me up again.

“ *Pri.* Indeed thou talk’st as thou hadst tasted
sorrows;

“ Would I could help thee !

“ *Bel.* Tis greatly in your power :
“ The world too speaks you charitable ; and I,
“ Who ne’er ask’d alms before, in that dear hope,
“ Am come a begging to you, Sir.

“ For what ?

“ *Bel.* Oh ! well regard me, is this voice a strange one ?

“ Consider too, when beggars once pretend

“ A case like mine, no little will content ’em.”

Pri. What would’st thou beg for ?

Bel. Pity and forgiveness. [*Throws up her veil.*

By the kind tender names of child and father, 41

Hear my complaints, and take me to your love.

Pri. My daughter !

Bel. Yes, your daughter, “ by a mother

“ Virtuous and noble, faithful to your honour,

“ Obedient to your will, kind to your wishes,

“ Dear to your arms. By all the joys she gave you,

“ When in her blooming years she was your treasure,

“ Look kindly on me ? In my face behold

“ The lineaments of her’s you’ve kiss’d so often,

“ Pleading the cause of your poor cast-off child.

“ *Pri.* Thou art my daughter.

“ *Bel.* Yes”—and you’ve oft told me,

With smiles of love and chaste paternal kisses,

I’d much resemblance of my mother.

“ *Pri.* Oh !

“ Had’st thou inherited her matchless virtues,

“ I’dad been too bless’d.

“ *Bel.* Nay, do not call to memory

“ My disobedience ; but let pity enter 60

“ Into your heart, and quite deface th’ impression.

“ For could you think how mine’s perplex’d, what
sadness,

“ Fears and despairs distract the peace within me,
 “ Oh! you would take me in your dear, dear arms,
 “ Hover with strong compassion o’er your young one,
 “ To shelter me with a protecting wing
 “ From the black gather’d storm, that’s just, just
 breaking.

Pri. Don’t talk thus.

Bel. Yes, I must; and you must hear too.
 I have a husband.

Pri. Damn him.

Bel. Oh! do not curse him;
 He would not speak so hard a word towards you
 On any terms, howe’er he deals with me.

Pri. Ha! what means my child?

“ *Bel.* Oh! there’s but this short moment
 “ ’Twixt me and fate: yet send me not with curses
 “ Down to my grave; afford me one kind blessing
 “ Before we part: just take me in your arms,
 “ And recommend me with a prayer to Heav’n, 80
 “ That I may die in peace; and when I’m dead—

“ *Pri.* How my soul’s catch’d!

“ *Bel.* Lay me, I beg you, lay me
 “ By the dear ashes of my tender mother.
 “ She would have pity’d me, had fate yet spar’d her.

“ *Pri.* By Heav’n, my aching heart forebodes much
 mischief!

“ Tell me thy story, for I’m still thy father.

“ *Bel.* No; I’m contented.

“ *Pri.* Speak.

“ *Bel.* No matter.

Pri. Tell me :

“ By yon bless’d Heav’n, my heart runs o’er with
fondness.

Bel. Oh !

Pri. Utter’t.

Bel. Oh ! my husband, my dear husband,
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,
To pierce the heart of your poor Belvidera.

Pri. Kill thee !

Bel. Yes, kill me. When he pass’d his faith
And covenant against your state and senate, 100
He gave me up a hostage for his truth :
With me a dagger and a dire commission,
Whene’er he fail’d, to plunge it thro’ this bosom.
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love
T’ attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour.
Great love prevail’d, and bless’d me with success !
He came, confess’d, betray’d his dearest friends
For promis’d mercy. Now they’re doom’d to suffer,
Gall’d with remembrance of what then was sworn,
If they are lost, he vows t’appease the gods
With this poor life, and make my blood th’ atonement.

Pri. Heav’ns !

“ *Bel.* Think you saw what pass’d at our last part-
ing :

“ Think you beheld him like a raging lion,

“ Pacing the earth, and tearing up his steps,

“ Fate in his eyes, and roaring with the pain

“ Of burning fury : think you saw his one hand

“ Fix’d on my throat, whilst the extended other

" Grasp'd a keen threat'ning dagger : Oh! 'twas thus
 " We last embrac'd, when, trembling with revenge
 " He dragg'd me to the ground, and at my bosom
 " Presented horrid death. Cry'd out, my friends,
 " Where are my friends? swore, wept, rag'd, threat-
 en'd, lov'd,
 " For yet he lov'd, and that dear love preserv'd me
 " To this last trial of a father's pity.
 " I fear not death; but cannot bear a thought
 " That that dear hand should do th' unfriendly of-
 fice."

If I was ever then your care, now hear me;
 Fly to the senate, save the promis'd lives
 Of his dear friends, ere mine be made the sacrifice.

Pri. Oh, my heart's comfort!

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Bel. Will you not, my father?

Weep not, but answer me.

Pri. By Heav'n I will.

Not one of them but what shall be immortal.

Canst thou forgive me all my follies past?

I'll henceforth be indeed a father; never,

Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,

Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,

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Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee:

Peace to thy heart. Farewel.

Bel. Go, and remember,

'Tis Belvidera's life her father pleads for.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

Enter ANTONIO.

“ Hum, hum, ha !

“ Signor Priuli, my lord Priuli, my lord, my lord, my
“ lord. Now we lords love to call one another by
“ our titles. My lord, my lord, my lord,—Pox on
“ him, I am a lord as well as he. And so let him
“ fiddle—I’ll warrant him he’s gone to the senate-
“ house, and I’ll be there too, soon enough for some-
“ body. Odd—here’s a tickling speech about the plot;
“ I’ll prove there’s a plot with a vengeance,—would
“ I had it without book; let me see——

“ Most reverend senators,
“ That there is a plot, surely by this time no man
“ that hath eyes or understanding in his head, will
“ presume to doubt ; ’tis as plain as the light in the
“ cucumber—no—hold there—cucumber does not
“ come in yet—’tis as plain as the light in the sun, or
“ as the man in the moon, even at noon-day. It is,
“ indeed, a pumpkin-plot, which, just as it was mel-
“ low, we have gathered, and now we have gathered
“ it, prepared and dressed it, shall we throw it like a
“ pickled cucumber out of the window ? No : that it
“ is not only a bloody, horrid, execrable, damnable,
“ and audacious plot : but it is, as I may so say, a saucy
“ plot : and we all know, most reverend fathers; that
“ which is sauce for a goose is sauce for a gander :
“ therefore, I say, as those blood-thirsty ganders of
“ the conspiracy would have destroyed us geese of
“ the senate, let us make haste to destroy them ; so I

“humbly move for hanging—Hah! hurry durry,—
“I think this will do; though I was something out
“at first, about the sun and the cucumber.

Enter AQUILINA.

“*Aqui.* Good morrow, senator.

“*Ant.* Nacky, my dear Nacky; morrow, Nacky,
“odd I am very brisk, very merry, very pert, very
“jovial—ha a a a a—kiss me, Nacky! how dost thou
“do, my little tory rory strumpet? Kiss me, I say,
“hussy, kiss me. 480

“*Aqui.* Kiss me, Nacky! hang you, Sir coxcomb;
“hang you, Sir.

“*Ant.* Haity taity, is it so indeed? With all my
“heart, faith—*Hey, then up go we.* Faith, *hey—then*
“*up go we,* dum dum derum dump. [Sings

“*Aqui.* Signor.

“*Ant.* Madona.

“*Aqui.* Do you intend to die in your bed?

“*Ant.* About threescore years hence much may be
“done, my dear.

“*Aqui.* You'll be hang'd, Signor.

“*Ant.* Hang'd, sweet-heart, pr'ythee be quiet;
“hang'd quoth-a; that's a merry conceit with all my
“heart; why thou jok'st, Nacky; thou art given to
“joking, I'll swear. Well, I protest, Nacky, nay I
“must protest, and will protest, that I love joking
“dearly. And I love thee for joking, and I'll kiss
“thee for joking, and towse thee for joking; and
“odd, I have a devilish mind to take thee aside about

“ that business for joking too, odd I have ; and *Hey*,
“ *then up we go*, dum dum derum dump. [Sings.

“ *Aqui*. See you this, Sir ? [Draws a Dagger.

“ *Ant*. O laud, a dagger ! Oh, laud ! it is naturally
“ my aversion, I cannot endure the sight on’t ; hide
“ it for Heaven’s sake ; I cannot look that way till it
“ be gone—hide it, hide it, oh ! oh ! hide it.

“ *Aqui*. Yes, in your heart I’ll hide it.

“ *Ant*. My heart ! what hide a dagger in my heart’s
blood !

“ *Aqui*. Yes, in thy heart, thy throat, thou pam-
per’d devil ;

“ Thou hast help’d to spoil my peace, and I’ll have
vengeance

“ On thy curs’d life, for all the bloody senate,

“ The perjur’d faithless senate. Where’s my lord,

“ My happiness, my love, my god, my hero,

“ Doom’d by thy accursed tongue, among the rest,

“ T’ a shameful rack ? By all the rage that’s in me,

“ I’ll be whole years in murdering thee.

“ *Ant*. Why, Nacky,

“ Wherefore so passionate ? What have I done ?

“ What’s the matter, my dear Nacky ? Am not I thy

“ love, thy happiness, thy lord, thy hero, thy senator,

“ and every thing in the world, Nacky ? 421

“ *Aqui*. Thou ! think’st thou, thou art fit to meet
my joys :

“ To bear the eager clasps of my embraces ?

“ Give me my Pierre, or—

“ *Ant.* Why, he’s to be hang’d, little Nacky;

“ Truss’d up for treason and so forth, child.

“ *Aqui.* Thou ly’st; stop down thy throat that
hellish sentence,

“ Or ’tis thy last: swear that my love shall live,

“ Or thou art dead.

“ *Ant.* Ah! h h h.

“ *Aqui.* Swear to recall his doom;

“ Swear at my feet, and tremble at my fury.

“ *Ant.* I do! Now if she would but kick a little

“ bit: one kick now, Ah! h h h,

“ *Aqui.* Swear or—

“ *Ant.* I do by these dear fragrant foots and little

“ toes, sweet as e e e e, my Nacky, Nacky, Nacky,

“ faith and troth.

“ *Aqui.* How!

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“ *Ant.* Nothing but untie thy shoe-strings a little,

“ that’s all, that’s all, as I hope to live, Nacky, that’s

“ all, all.

“ *Aqui.* Nay, then—

“ *Ant.* Hold; hold; thy love, thy lord, thy hero,

“ shall be preserv’d and safe.

“ *Aqui.* Or may this poniard

“ Rust in thy heart.

“ *Ant.* With all my soul.

“ *Aqui.* Farewel.

[Exit.

“ *Ant.* Adieu. Why, what a bloody-minded, invete-

“ rate, termagantstrumpet, have I been plagued with!

“ Oh! h h! Yet no more! nay, then I die, I die—

“ I’m dead already.”

[Stretches himself out.

SCENE II.

A Garden. Enter JAFFIER.

Jaf. Final destruction seize on all the world.
 Bend down ye heav'ns, and shutting round this earth,
 Crush the vile globe into its first confusion;
 "Scorch it with elemental flames to one curs'd cinder,
 "And all us little creepers in't, call'd men,
 "Burn, burn to nothing: but let Venice burn,
 "Hotter than all the rest: Here kindle hell, 460
 "Ne'er to extinguish; and let souls hereafter
 "Groan here, in all those pains which mine feels now."

Enter BELVIDERA.

Bel. My life—— [Meeting him.

Jaf. My plague—— [Turning from her.

Bel. Nay, then I see my ruin.

If I must die!

"*Jaf.* No, death's this day too busy;
 "Thy father's ill-tim'd mercy came too late.
 "I thank thee for thy labours though; and him too:
 "But all my poor, betray'd, unhappy friends,
 "Have summons to prepare for fate's black hour;
 "And yet I live.

"*Bel.* Then be the next my doom:
 "I see, thou hast pass'd my sentence in thy heart,
 "And I'll no longer weep, or plead against it,
 "But with the humblest, most obedient patience,

“Meet thy dear hands and kiss ’em when they wound
me.

“Indeed I’m willing, but I beg thee do it

“With some remorse; and when thou giv’st the
blow,

“View me with eyes of a relenting love, 480

“And shew me pity, for ’twill sweeten justice.”

“*Jaf.* Shew pity to thee!

“*Bel.* Yes; and when thy hands,

“Charg’d with my fate, come trembling to the deed,

“As thou hast done a thousand thousand times

“To this poor breast, when kinder rage hath brought
thee,

“When our stung hearts have leap’d to meet each
other,

“And melting kisses seal’d our lips together;

“When joys have left me gasping in thy arms:

“So let my death come now, and I’ll not shrink
from’t.”

Jaf. Nay, Belvidera, do not fear my cruelty,
Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy;
But answer me to what I shall demand,
With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

Bel. I will, when I’ve done weeping—

Jaf. Fie, no more on’t——

How long is’t since that miserable day
We wedded first.

Bel. Oh! h h!

Jaf. Nay, keep in thy tears, 500
Lest they unman me too.

Bel. Heav'n knows I cannot ;
The words you utter sound so very sadly,
The streams will follow—

Jaf. Come, I'll kiss 'em dry then.

Bel. But was't a miserable day ?

Jaf. A curs'd one.

Bel. I thought it otherwise ; and you've often sworn,
“ In the transporting hours of warmest love,
“ When sure you spoke the truth, you've sworn,”
you bless'd it.

Jaf. 'Twas a rash oath.

Bel. Then why am I not curs'd too ?

Jaf. No, Belvidera ; by th' eternal truth,
I doat with too much fondness.

Bel. Still so kind !

Still then do you love me ?

Jaf. “ Nature in her workings,
“ Inclines not with more ardour to creation,
“ Than I do now towards thee :” Man ne'er was
bless'd,

Since the first pair met, as I have been. 520

Bel. Then sure you will not curse me ?

Jaf. No, I'll bless thee.

I came on purpose, Belvidera, to bless thee,
'Tis now, I think, three years, we've liv'd together.

Bel. And may no fatal minute ever part us,
Till, reverend grown for age and love, we go
Down to one grave, as our last bed, together ;
There sleep in peace, till an eternal morning.

“ *Jaf.* When will that be ? [Sighing.

“ *Bel.* I hope, long ages hence.

“ *Jaf.* Have I not hitherto, (I beg thee tell me
“ Thy very fears) us’d thee with tender’s love ?

“ Did e’er my soul rise up in wrath against thee ?

“ Did I e’er frown when Belvidera smil’d ?

“ Or by the least unfriendly word, betray

“ Abating passion ? have I ever wrong’d thee ?

“ *Bel.* No.

“ *Jaf.* Has my heart, or have my eyes, e’er wan-
der’d

“ To any other woman ?

“ *Bel.* Never, never—I were the worst of false
ones, should I accuse thee. 540

“ I own, I’ve been too happy, bless’d above

“ My sex’s charter.”

Jaf. Did I not say, I came to bless thee ?

Bel. You did.

Jaf. Then hear me, bounteous Heav’n :

Pour down your blessings on this beauteous head,

Where everlasting sweets are always springing,

With a continual giving hand : let peace,

Honour, and safety, always hover round her ;

Feed her with plenty ; let her eyes ne’er see

A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning ?

Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest,

Harmless as her own thoughts ; and prop her virtue,

To bear the loss of one that too much lov’d ;

And comfort her with patience in our parting.

Bel. How ! Parting, parting !

Jaf. Yes, for ever parting ;

I have sworn, Belvidera, by yon heav'n,
That best can tell how much I lose to leave thee,
We part this hour for ever. 560

Bel. O! call back
Your cruel blessing; stay with me and curse me.

Jaf. No, 'tis resolv'd.

Bel. Then hear me too, just Heav'n:
"Pour down your curses on this wretched head,
"With never-ceasing vengeance; let despair,
"Danger and infamy, nay all, surround me;
"Starve me with wantings; let my eyes ne'er see
"A sight of comfort, nor my heart know peace:
"But dash my days with sorrow, nights with horrors,
"Wild as my own thoughts now, and let loose fury,
"To make me mad enough for what I lose,
"If I must lose him. If I must? I will not.
"Oh! turn and hear me?"

Jaf. Now hold, heart, or never.

Bel. By all the tender days we've liv'd together,
"By all our charming nights, and joys that crown'd
'em,"

Pity my sad condition; speak, but speak,

Jaf. Oh! h h!

Bel. By these arms, that now cling round thy neck,
"By this dear kiss, and by ten thousand more,"
By these poor streaming eyes— 582

Jaf. Murder! unhold me:
By th' immortal destiny that doom'd me

[*Draws his dagger.*

To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer;
Resolve to let me go, or see me fall——

Bel. Hold, Sir, be patient."

Jaf. Hark, the dismal bell [*Passing Bell tolls.*
Tolls out for death! I must attend its call too;
For my poor friend, my dying Pierre, expects me:
He sent a message to require I'd see him
Before he dy'd, and take his last forgiveness.
Farewel, for ever.

Bel. Leave thy dagger with me,
Bequeath me something—Not one kiss at parting;
Oh! my poor heart, when wilt thou break?

[*Going out, looks back at him*

Jaf. Yet stay:
We have a child, as yet a tender infant;
Be a kind mother to him when I'm gone;
Breed him in virtue, and the paths of honour, 600
But never let him know his father's story;
I charge thee, guard him from the wrongs my fate
May do his future fortune, or his name.

Now—nearer yet— [*Approaching each other.*

Oh! that my arms were rivetted
Thus round thee ever! But my friend! my oath!
This, and no more. [*Kisses her.*

Bel. Another, sure another,
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of,
I'll giv't him truly.

Jaf. So now farewel.

Bel. For ever?

Jaf. Heav'n knows for ever; all good angels guard
thee. [*Exit.*

Bel. All ill ones sure had charge of me this moment.

Curs'd be my days, and doubly curs'd my nights,
" Which I must now mourn out in widow'd tears ;
" Blasted be every herb, and fruit, and tree ;
" Curs'd be the rain that falls upon the earth,
" And may the general curse reach man and beast."
Oh ! give me daggers, fire or water : 600
How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves
Huzzing and booming round my sinking head.
Till I descended to the peaceful bottom !
Oh ! there's all quiet, here all rage and fury :
The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain ;
I long for thick substantial sleep : Hell ! hell !
Burst from the centre, rage and roar aloud,
If thou art half so hot, so mad as I am.

" Enter PRIULI, and Servants.

" Who's there ? [*They seize her.*

" *Pri.* Run, seize, and bring her safely home ;

" Guard her as you would life : Alas, poor creature !

" *Bel.* What to my husband ! then conduct me
quickly ;

" Are all things ready ; Shall we die most gloriously ?

" Say not a word of this to my old father :

" Murmuring streams, soft shades, and springing
flowers !

" Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of amber.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Opening, discovers a scaffold, and a wheel prepared for the Execution of PIERRE; then enter Officer, PIERRE, and Guards, “a Friar,” Executioner, and a great Rabble.

“*Offi.* Room, room there—stand all by, make
“room for the prisoner.”

Pier. My friend not come yet?

“*Fri.* Why are you so obstinate? 640

“*Pier.* Why you so troublesome, that a poor
wretch can’t die in peace,

“But you, like ravens, will be croaking round him—

“*Fri.* Yet Heav’n—

“*Pier.* I tell thee, Heav’n and I are friends :

“I ne’er broke peace with’t yet, by cruel murders,

“Rapine, or perjury, or vile deceiving ;

“But liv’d in moral justice towards all men :

“Nor am a foe to the most strong believers,

“Howe’er my own short-sighted faith confine me.

“*Fri.* But an all-seeing judge—

“*Pier.* You say my conscience

“Must be my accuser ; I have search’d that con-
science,

“And find no records there of crimes that scare me.

“*Fri.* ’Tis strange, you should want faith.

“*Pier.* You want to lead

“My reason blind-fold, like a hamper’d lion,

“Check’d of it’s nobler vigour ; then when baited

“ Down, to obedient tameness, make it couch
“ And shew strange tricks, which you call signs of
 faith :
“ So silly souls are gull’d, and you get money. 660
“ Away ; no more. Captain, I’d have hereafter
“ This fellow write no lies of my conversion,
“ Because he has crept upon my troubled hours.”

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaf. Hold : eyes be dry ;
Heart, strengthen me to bear
This hideous sight, and humble me, to take
The last forgiveness of a dying friend,
Betray’d by my vile falshood, to his ruin.
Oh, Pierre !

Pier. Yet nearer.

Jaf. Crawling on my knees,
And prostrate on the earth, let me approach thee :
How shall I look up to thy injured face,
That always us’d to smile with friendship on me ?
It darts an air of so much manly virtue,
That I, methinks, look little in thy sight,
And stripes are fitter for me, than embraces.

Pier. Dear to my arms, tho’ thou’st undone my
 fame,
I can’t forget to love thee. Pr’ythee, Jaffier,
Forgive that filthy blow my passion dealt thee ;
I’m now preparing for the land of peace,
And fain would have the charitable wishes
Of all good men, like thee, to bless my journey.

Jaf. Good! I am the vilest creature, worse than
e'er

Suffer'd the shameful fate thou'rt going to taste of.

“ Why was I sent for to be us'd thus kindly ?

“ Call, call me villain, as I am ! describe

“ The foul complexion of my hateful deeds :

“ Lead me to th' rack, and stretch me in thy stead,

“ I've crimes enough to give it its full load,

“ And do it credit : thou wilt but spoil the use on't.

“ And honest men hereafter bear its figure

“ About them, as a charm from treacherous friend-
ship.”

Offi. The time grows short, your friends are dead
already.

Jaf. Dead !

Pier. Yes, dead, Jaffier ; they've all died like men
too,

Worthy their character.

Jaf. And what must I do ?

Pier. Oh, Jaffier !

Jaf. Speak aloud thy burthen'd soul,
And tell thy troubles to thy tortur'd friend.

Pier. Friend ! Could'st thou yet be a friend, a ge-
nerous friend,

I might hope comfort from thy noble sorrows.

Heav'n knows, I want a friend.

Jaf. And I a kind one,

That would not thus scorn my repenting virtue,
Or think when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

Pier. No ! live, I charge thee, Jaffier,

Jaf. Yes, I will live :
But it shall be to see thy fall reveng'd
At such a rate, as Venice long shall groan for.

Pier. Wilt thou ?

Jaf. I will, by Heav'n.

Pier. Then still thou'rt noble,
And I forgive thee. Oh !—yet—shall I trust thee ?

Jaf. No ; I've been false already.

Pier. Dost thou love me ?

Jaf. Rip up my heart, and satisfy thy doubtings.

Pier. Curse on this weakness. [*He weeps.*]

Jaf. Tears ! Amazement ! Tears !
I never saw thee melted thus before ;
And know there's something labouring in thy bosom,
That must have vent : Tho' I'm a villain, tell me.

Pier. See'st thou that engine ? [*Pointing to the Wheel.*]

Jaf. Why ?

Pier. Is't fit a soldier, who has liv'd with honour,
Fought nation's quarrels, and been crown'd with conquest,
quest,

Be expos'd a common carcase on a wheel ?

Jaf. Hah !

Pier. Speak ! is't fitting ?

Jaf. Fitting !

Pier. Yes ; is't fitting ?

Jaf. What's to be done ?

Pier. I'd have thee undertake
Something that's noble, to preserve my memory
From the disgrace that's ready to attain it.

Off. The day grows late, Sir.

Pier. I'll make haste. Oh, Jaffier!
Tho' thou'st betray'd me, do me some way justice.

Jaf. No more of that : thy wishes shall be satisfied ;
I have a wife, and she shall bleed : my child too,
Yield up his little throat, and all
T' appease thee——

[*Going away, Pierre holds him.*

Pier. No—this—no more. [He whispers Jaffier.

Jaf. Hah! is't then so?

Pier. Most certainly.

Jaf. I'll do it.

Pier. Remember,

Off. Sir,

Pier. Come, now I'm ready,

[*He and Jaffier ascend the scaffold.*

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour ;
Keep off the rabble that I may have room
To entertain my fate, and die with decency.
Come.

[*Takes off his gown, executioner prepares to bind him.*

“ *Fri.* Son.

“ *Pier.* Hence, tempter.

“ *Off.* Stand off, priest.

“ *Pier.* I thank you, Sir.”

[*To the Officer.*

You'll think on't?

[*To Jaffier.*

Jaf. 'Twon't grow stale before to-morrow.

Pier. Now, Jaffier! now I'm going. Now—

[*Executioner having bound him.*

Jaf. Have at thee,

Thou honest heart, then—here

[*Stabs him.*

And this is well too.

[Stabs himself.

“*Fri.* Damnable deed!”

Pier. Now thou hast indeed been faithful.

This was done nobly—We have deceiv’d the senate.

Jaf. Bravely.

Pier. Ha, ha, ha——oh! oh!

[Dies.

Jaf. Now, ye curs’d rulers,

Thus of the blood y’ave shed, I make libation

And sprinkle it mingling. May it rest upon you,

And all your race. Be henceforth peace a stranger

Within your walls; let plagues and famine waste

Your generation—Oh, poor Belvidera!

Sir, I have a wife, bear this in safety to her,

A token that with my dying breath I bless’d her,

And the dear little infant left behind me.

I’m sick——I’m quiet.

[Dies.

“*Offi.* Bear this news to the senate,

“ And guard their bodies, till there’s further orders.

“ Heav’n grant I die so well.” [Scene shuts upon them.

Soft Music. Enter BELVIDERA distracted, led by two of
her Women, PRIULI and Servants.

Pri. Strengthen her heart with patience, pitying
Heav’n.

Bel. Come, come, come, come, come, nay, come to
bed.

Pr’ythee, my love. The winds; hark how they
whistle;

And the rain beats: Oh! how the weather shrinks
me!

You are angry now, who cares? Pish, no indeed,
Chuse then; I say you shall not go, you shall not;
Whip your ill-nature; get you gone then; Oh!
Are you return'd? See, father, here he's come again:
Am I to blame to love him? O, thou dear one,
Why do you fly me? Are you angry still then?
Jaffier, where art thou? father why do you do thus?
Stand off, don't hide him from me. He's here some-
where.

Stand off, I say: What gone? Remember't, tyrant:
I may revenge myself for this trick, one day.
I'll do't—I'll do't. “Renault's a nasty fellow;
“Hang him, hang him, hang him.”

Enter Officer.

Pri. News, what news?

[Officer whispers Priuli]

Off. Most sad, Sir;
Jaffier, upon the scaffold, to prevent
A shameful death, stabb'd Pierre, and next himself;
Both fell together.

Pri. Daughter.

Bel. Ha! look there!

My husband bloody and his friend too! Murder!
Who has done this? Speak to me, thou sad vision:
On these poor trembling knees I beg it. Vanish'd—
Here they went down—Oh, I'll dig, dig the den up!
You shan't delude me thus. Hoa, Jaffier, Jaffier.
Peep up, and give me but a look. I have him!

L

I've got him, father : Oh ! “ now how I'll smuggle him ! ”

My love ! my dear ! my blessing ! help me ! help me !
They have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.
Nay—now they pull so hard—farewel— [Dies.

“ *Maid.* She's dead ;
“ Breathless and dead.”

Pri. Oh ; guard me from the sight on't.
Lead me into some place that's fit for mourning :
Where the free air, light, and the chearful sun,
May never enter : hang it round with black :
Set up one taper, that may last a day,
As long as I've to live ; and there all leave me :
Sparing no tears, when you this tale relate,
But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

*THE Text is done, and now for application,
And when that's ended, pass your approbation.
Though the Conspiracy's prevented here,
Methinks I see another hatching there :
And there's a certain faction fain would sway,
If they had strength enough, and damn this play :
But this the author bid me boldly say,
If any take this plainness in ill part,
He's glad on't from the bottom of his heart.
Poets in honour of the truth should write,
With the same spirit brave men for it fight.
And though against him causeless hatreds rise,
And daily where he goes of late he spies
The scowls of sullen and revengful eyes ;
'Tis what he knows, with much contempt, to bear,
And serves a cause too good to let him fear.
He fears no poison from an incens'd drab,
No ruffian's five-foot sword, nor rascal's stab ;
Nor any other snares of mischief laid,
Not a Rose-Alley cudgel ambuscade,
From any private cause where malice reigns,
Or general pique all blockheads have to brains ;
Nothing shall daunt his pen, when truth does call,
No, not the * picture-mangler at Guildhall.*

* He that cut the Duke of York's picture.

EPILOGUE.

*The rebel-tribe, of which that vermin's one,
Have now set forward, and their course begun ;
And while that prince's figure they deface,
As they before had massacred his name,
Durst their base fears but look him in the face,
They'd use his person as they've us'd his fame :
A face in which such lineaments they read
Of that great martyr's, whose rich blood they shed,
That their rebellious hate they still retain,
And in his son would murder him again.
With indignation then let each brave heart
Rouze and unite, to take his injur'd part ;
'Till royal love and goodness call him home,
And songs of triumph meet him as he come :
'Till Heav'n his honour and our peace restore,
And villains never wrong his virtue more.*



Otway, Thomas,

Venice preserv'd

London 1791

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